



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





UNCLAIMED

Manton Marble & Co  
Bar Harbor, Maine  
U. S. of America





Bodleian library

Oxford

May 3 1887.

My dear Sir

I beg you to accept the best thanks of the Curators  
of the Bodleian and of myself for the\* undermentioned  
work which you have been so kind as to present to the

Library of the University.

Yours very faithfully

Edward F. Nicholson

Albany

• Bible Characters - Sermons  
by A. G. Haven.

Leahm Marble Esq













# BIBLE CHARACTERS

BEING

SELECTIONS FROM SERMONS

OF

ALEXANDER GARDINER MERCER, D.D.

(1817-1882)

---

WITH THE

COMPLIMENTS OF THE AUTHOR

AND A FOREWORD

NEW YORK & LONDON

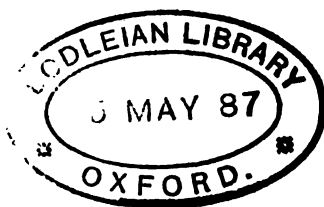
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

*The Knickerbocker Press*

1885

106.

COPYRIGHT BY  
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
1884



*Press of*  
*G. P. Putnam's Sons*  
*New York*

## CONTENTS.

---

|                                                 | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|
| MEMOIR OF REV. DR. MERCER . . . . .             | v    |
| ABRAHAM . . . . .                               | I    |
| ISAAC . . . . .                                 | 14   |
| JACOB AND ESAU . . . . .                        | 24   |
| JACOB'S VISION, CONSECRATION, AND VOW . . . . . | 39   |
| JOSEPH . . . . .                                | 55   |
| CALEB . . . . .                                 | 66   |
| JOSHUA . . . . .                                | 77   |
| ELI . . . . .                                   | 88   |
| DAVID . . . . .                                 | 100  |
| DAVID: HIS SIN AND REPENTANCE . . . . .         | 114  |
| JABEZ . . . . .                                 | 124  |
| MARY . . . . .                                  | 133  |
| JOHN THE BAPTIST . . . . .                      | 151  |
| THE GREATNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST . . . . .     | 165  |
| NICODEMUS . . . . .                             | 170  |
| SIMON PETER . . . . .                           | 183  |
| ZACCHEUS . . . . .                              | 190  |
| PETER'S DENIAL . . . . .                        | 208  |
| PONTIUS PILATE, THE GOVERNOR . . . . .          | 221  |
| JUDAS ISCARIOT . . . . .                        | 232  |
| STEPHEN . . . . .                               | 244  |
| SAUL OF TARSUS . . . . .                        | 256  |

|                              | PAGE |
|------------------------------|------|
| PAUL AND BARNABUS . . . . .  | 271  |
| PAUL AT ATHENS . . . . .     | 284  |
| GALLIO . . . . .             | 292  |
| PAUL BEFORE FELIX . . . . .  | 302  |
| PAUL BEFORE FESTUS . . . . . | 312  |
| PAUL AT MELITA . . . . .     | 320  |

## MEMOIR OF REV. DR. MERCER.

---

OF clergymen, once eminent in the great religious connexions, current biographies record but little more than a few dates, the assumption and close of a pastoral or episcopal charge, a few titles of published sermons, the bachelor's, the master's, the doctor's degree, the years of birth and death. Add that the preacher was eloquent, that the writer had an excellent use of his native tongue, was familiar with this or that lore, and such a record is complete. Rarely is it crowded with circumstance. Even in men's lives the most crowded, the growth of the individual mind, its character, the occasion and process of its expansions, match the dates and details of a biography as little as a list of Presidents of these United States coincides with a real history of the Republic. Their respectable names, the dates of their accession, though recited in order, do not best recall the actual growth of the great democracy, the moments and the processes of its vast enlargements, the secrets of its spiritual transformations. Yet in any memorial of a quiet life, some few dull dates and incidents, which, if other, had been the same, are almost all that can ever be looked for, except the memoir be autobiographic, like that of Newman or



of Gibbon. Who else but one's self could track the long sequels of a friendship or an investment? Who else but the author of "*Apologia pro Vita Sua*" could know that, in a Sicilian orange-boat bound from Palermo to Marseilles, a devout heart first sang

"Lead, kindly light"?

Who but the historian of the Decline and Fall, could say what inspiration flowed from voices of bare-footed Franciscans heard amidst the ruins of the Roman Capitol singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter?

An autobiography of Alexander Gardiner Mercer (alas that none such exists!) could but challenge extreme interest, where a mere biography might not. The testimony of those among his contemporaries in the higher walks of life,—in the church, in affairs, in literature, in politics, in law,—is clear authority concerning his extraordinary gifts, acquirements, and powers. Impressed, admiring witnesses of the forthputting of those powers within the restrictive limits of the pulpit are numerous and accordant. So that an interior record of their growth seems needful to interpret him to those at least who never saw him, and can read only the written briefs of a score of his sermons and the external story of an uneventful life.

The outset of his career, to be sure, was exceptional. He was equipped by training in the three faculties of arts, theology, and law. Alexander Gardiner Mercer

was born in Philadelphia, on the 4th of January, 1817. He was reared from birth to youth by a mother's care exclusively, being the youngest of four sons whose father died during his infancy. Sent to the College of New Jersey at Princeton,\* he became Valedictorian of the class of 1837.

What manner of person he was, pausing there at the threshold of young manhood to bid farewell to teachers and fellow-pupils before quitting the foster-mother's roof and discipline, one of those who had known him longest can best say. These are the words of a letter of introduction which committed the young student, on the part of one of the masters of ethical, to the care of one of the

---

\* A faded torn sheet is extant, sent by the college officer, in the last session of that year, for a postage of ten cents, to Mrs. Jane Mercer, Philadelphia, recording her son's rank on a scale of merit, 100 the maximum. In scholarship the lad lacks but eight per cent. of the attainable, with no absences from recitation unexcused. "Industry 100," and "Behaviour 100," are his marks, despite 24 excused and 8 unexcused absences from prayers, and 25 excused and 7 unexcused absences from his room. Parents are advised in this circular letter to prevent the spending of much money by their sons as "not necessary, not honorable, nor in any respect useful." The scale of maximum legitimate expense is instructive. Winter Session : board twenty-two weeks, \$44 ; tuition, \$20 ; room rent, \$6 ; fuel, \$13 ; library, \$1 ; servants' wages, \$4 ; washing, \$6 ; incidental expenses, \$2.50. Total, \$96.50. Add \$77.50 for similar expenses of the Summer Session, and \$174, plus the expense of books, clothes, lights, furniture, and travel, make the aggregate of the year. Dr. M'Cosh's predecessor is eloquent for a page beseeching parents to shut off supplies ere the next Commencement, since in vain have the Trustees and Faculty striven otherwise to guard the interests of the College and the morals of successive graduating classes from their habit of having "a ball or dance with such refreshments as are usual on similar occasions ; and after the ladies have withdrawn, the recent graduates and others have a supper and"—— but let us draw the veil !

masters of legal, principle and learning. Prof. James W. Alexander of Princeton, wrote to Hon. Joseph R. Ingersoll of Philadelphia, Nov. 24, 1837, as follows :

“Mr. Mercer after having been for several years under my instructions has determined to place himself under the influence of your counsels in the study of the law. Let me, then, say, as I do with great pleasure, that Mr. Mercer has greatly won our esteem and respect for his gentlemanlike demeanor, punctual assiduity, and extensive acquisitions. As a public speaker, in particular, he was recognized as the very best in a very large class. In having him near you, I doubt not that you will enjoy the acquaintance of one who will richly profit by the advantage of so distinguished a guidance.”

After admission to the Bar of Philadelphia in 1839 had attested the measure of his study in the Law, young Mercer for several years devoted himself to a very wide range of studies in literature, and afterward in philosophy and theology. Before his final choice of a career was made or disclosed he appears to have been willing to accept the professorship of Belles Lettres and Philosophy in the University of Virginia; and three letters are extant, which, like one already given, are interesting indications of the rank he took in the judgment of men accustomed to pass upon the acquirements, the characters, and the promise of many generations of “the bright tribes of the school.”

Dr. Alexander himself adds a distincter appreciation than before of the singular individuality which had been ripening under his eye.

"Mr. Mercer possesses a cultivated and highly refined mind, and very honorable and delicate feelings, and is I believe very conscientious ; and I should be gratified that a person of such superior moral and intellectual excellence could be placed in a situation so commanding in its influence."

That eminent veteran in theology, Prof. Charles Hodge, of the Princeton Theological Seminary, writes of him on the 16th of June, 1845, after having "for several years enjoyed his acquaintance" and known his devoted "attention to theological, literary, and philosophical studies."

"He is a gentleman distinguished for his amiable disposition, courteous manners, and strict moral integrity and Christian principle. His acquirements, especially in the departments above referred to, are unusually great ; and his mind, which is of a high order, is peculiarly adapted to literary and philosophical investigations."

A former President of Lafayette College, John W. Yeomans, D.D., who was long a principal philosophical contributor to the *Princeton Review*, speaks of his young friend of 28 in terms that recall the language of Victor Cousin, when commending his greater critic, Sir William Hamilton, to the Town Council of Edinburgh, for the chair of Logic in that university which was afterward to become yet more illustrious in his fame.

"No intelligent person acquainted with Mr. Mercer can fail to admire his literary and social accomplishments, and his pure and elevated sentiments as a gentleman and as a Christian.

From a familiar acquaintance with his intellectual endowments and habits I have the most decided belief that his powers of scientific investigation and illustration are extraordinary. He has given his attention largely to the various branches of the science of human nature and his knowledge on those subjects is very extensive. His ardor in this class of studies, his refined taste, and ample attainments in general learning, and his uncommon capacity for analyzing and explaining the intellectual, moral, and social constitution of man would, in my judgment, insure a greater eminence to that professorship and greater advantage to the reputation and progress of philosophy in our country than I should expect from the labors of any other gentleman of my acquaintance."

Before completing his third decade, the young scholar made another choice for the field of his life's labors than that designated to him by the applause of these masters in philosophy and letters. Siloa for Castalia. He was ordained by Bishop Alonzo Potter in 1846, and, with brief intermission while teaching Moral and Intellectual Philosophy and Logic in the University of Pennsylvania in 1854, continued steadfastly for the remainder of his days, in that chosen employ. In 1859 Columbia College, New York, conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. He died, November 3d, 1882.

The parochial labors which in the later years of his life became a smaller part of its duties, were discharged with faithful zeal and uniform success. His first parishioners, at St. John's Church, Clifton, Staten Island, N. Y., where he remained for several years until in 1852, broken health obliged him to resign the pas-

toral charge, and seek rest and relaxation abroad, gave utterance to so much grief at reluctant parting with their "faithful and devoted guide, their friend and comforter in trouble and sickness," that their language would seem to err by excess were not the distinguished names of the Wardens and Vestrymen chosen to express their feelings, a sufficient proof that it did but denote them truly. Nor indeed was this exceptional. It was the same even at Newark, N. J., where, after his return from Europe, for a few months during the temporary absence of the Rector of Trinity Church he preached only, but where his marvellous power as a preacher first came fully forth, and the city itself was stirred; it was the same when at Newport, R. I., he was Rector of Trinity Church; at Boston, Mass., where, under Bishop Manton Eastburn, he was elected in May, 1860, Assistant Minister of Trinity Church upon the Greene Foundation, and remained until his return to the milder climate of Newport; and last of all in the annual summer ministry, which he continued till his death, at All Saints' Chapel, now All Saints' Memorial Chapel;—the severance of ties which only natures richly endowed can form with many sorts and conditions of men, was marked by similar and heartfelt outpourings. During the earlier years of this period, the repute of his eloquence was becoming widespread; for New Haven, Washington, Richmond, and Chicago sought to secure his presence and powers in their pulpits; and during the later years of the period, the work of his ministry

was mostly in the public services of All Saints' Chapel ; but even so slight a memoir as this (which it would misbecome the writer to enlarge to a portrayal of the Christian, the Churchman, the Christian minister,) would be intolerable in its insufficiency, had it failed to make mention, along with his more shining qualities, of that patient discharge of the pastoral offices. Costly among all human products is a genuine personal sympathy with bruised or broken hearts. In the division of grief, in the helpful uplifting under trial of every sort,—were shown the tenderness, the refinement of his powerful emotional nature. That, indeed, was discernible in the very troubles which made his own path sometimes a sad and weary one, but was conspicuous in the life-long and devoted attachments which its pure quality, no less than its mere volume inspired and sustained.

Of his preaching the present collection of sketches of scriptural characters affords a glimpse, no more. Another collection of sermons may hereafter afford another glimpse. But often his discourses, amply premeditated always, were wholly or in part unwritten, and never were they more impressive, for he was born an orator. Of such gifts, however marvellous, the memory fades at last from among men, as of those forensic triumphs which everywhere have cast an enduring lustre upon the administration of the law, yet left to splendid genius but the shadow of a name. Beside the written words of the preacher himself, here published, it has

seemed befitting to cite one, and only one contemporary attestation, what charm and what persuasion the gospel message bore when spoken through his voice.

But before quoting the letter of March 27th, 1855, in which Bishop Alonzo Potter, than whom no better judge of the highest kind of pulpit eloquence ever lived, records that testimony, two or three letters may suitably have place which illustrate the friendships Dr. Mercer could inspire, and which in these as in other instances, were the ornaments of a long and honored life. One of the letters is from the gallant Chas. J. Biddle of Philadelphia to Dr. Mercer himself when in Europe.

[FROM CHAS. J. BIDDLE TO ALEX. G. MERCER.]

Sept. 11, 1852.

"MY DEAR ALEXANDER :—I received your friendly farewell letter, but was sorry that you made it the substitute for a visit. I am not of so hilarious a temper that your being sick or sad should keep you from my company; nor is there any time in which a man may more profit by society than when he is out of spirits. To me you are and have always been most welcome. My warm regard for you, which dates from an early period in our acquaintance, has only gathered strength as years have rolled on, from my increasing appreciation of your talents and character. I am but a bad hand at protestations of regard, but be assured that by no one is your friendship more highly prized or more fully returned than by myself. I was very sorry to hear you were unwell. \* \* \* In civilized society a man's career in life must be run on one out of three or four regular beaten tracks, and on it he can run slow or fast—the tortoise often beats the hare. The pro-



fessions are so many procrustean beds ; if you are lucky enough to fit one of them exactly, all goes well with you, you lie comfortably and get rest. But if your moral or intellectual nature requires to be strained or cramped to adapt it to its lot, you have an uneasy time of it, until you get used to it, as they say eels do to skinning. There is a field in which a man may have free scope—if I had the talent which I know you have, I would enter it—you could reap a rich harvest. I mean literature. \* \* \* On such a subject for instance as the church, its influence as a political establishment to the prejudice or the benefit of religion.

“The French have displayed such benighted, egregious ignorance in all their recent political arrangements that they have forfeited their right to be called an enlightened people. Think of a nation of republicans electing with great unanimity a dynastic pretender, *after* he had actually manifested his designs by violently possessing himself of absolute power. I don't think Oliver Cromwell could ever have got a popular vote to sanction his Protectorship.”

The letters below, also from one no longer living, were written by Manton Eastburn, then Bishop of Massachusetts ; the first, to Dr. Mercer ; the second, of him, to Mrs. Nathaniel Amory at Newport.

[FROM BISHOP MANTON EASTBURN TO ALEX. G. MERCER, D.D.]

TREMONT ST., Dec. 4, 1860.

“MY DEAR MERCER :—Your note of yesterday has been received. I beg you to be under no apprehensions that the conclusions you may arrive at respecting the new \* \* \* whatever they may be, will produce any change in our affectionate relations. A man who, like yourself, unites, with the independent exercise of thought which belongs to an intelligent

mind, the high and honorable bearing of a Christian gentleman, need be under no uneasiness as to what he may expect from me. I hope you will think as I do in this matter of \* \* \* ; for I deem it a most effective movement \* \* \* to advance the cause of pure and undefiled religion. But I am content *entirely* that you should exercise your own judgment in this matter, knowing that you will do so under a sense of your responsibility to God. Affectionately yours,"

[FROM BISHOP MANTON EASTBURN TO MRS. NATH'L AMORY.]

"Be pleased to remember me most affectionately to Dr. Mercer. I tell you most sincerely that I have an intense admiration of him, as for other qualities of intellect and heart, so especially for this,—his lofty tone, his high sense of honor, the delicacy and child-like warmth and nobleness of his nature. It is very rare \* \* \* this grandeur of character."

To whom the following letter of Bishop Alonzo Potter was addressed, the reader will gladly abstain from asking, in order to enjoy, beside the Bishop's tribute to Dr. Mercer's powers, an example in a mere trifle, of the experienced wisdom and politic sagacity which habitually tempered that great prelate's exercise of episcopal influence or authority.

[FROM BISHOP ALONZO POTTER, D.D., TO ———.]

PHILADELPHIA, March 27, 1855.

"MY DEAR SIR :—I received and read with deep interest your powerful appeal. My personal inclination has been strongly with you, but there are difficulties in the case which appall Mr. Mercer, which from any one would require serious consideration, but which to a mind so sensitive and so averse to wounding others as his, seem all but insurmountable. He

would wish to occupy the post which becomes a junior, but he foresees himself and is admonished by others to anticipate that practically the congregation would not permit this, and that in spite of his best efforts and most generous purposes he will be thrust into a position which will bear hardly on an older brother in the ministry, and make it impossible that either party shall not be misconstrued and false relations obtain between them. Finding this opinion of his own shared by those who he thinks ought to be better informed, he shrinks greatly from a step, which once taken could not easily be retrieved.

I agree with you that he ought to return to the ministry. It is only within the last ten days that I have heard him preach. If I had known at all what his powers in the pulpit are, I should never have suggested and procured his call to our University. I had known him as a thinker and talker of extraordinary powers, and as such a man as every friend of education must wish to see in contact with the young men of our land. He has overcome, as a preacher, some great difficulties which beset studious and philosophical minds, and is evidently second to few pulpit orators in this or any other country. He must go back into the Church, and as far as I can with a good conscience I shall press your claims.

I am, dear sir, yours sincerely.

“A thinker and talker of extraordinary powers,” a preacher “second to few pulpit orators in this or any other country,”—such testimony from such a witness needs no collateral light. It is implied, certainly, that a pulpit is not a platform. So when Rufus Choate said: “I hold a good book and a good sermon to be not only well *per se*, but to be worthy, fitting, and adequate achievements of good minds,”—that most brilliant of all American orators in a court, a senate, or a crowd, was

well advised what restrictive limits bound the powers of an orator in a place which assuredly is neither bar, nor stump, nor rostrum. The preaching of Dr. Mercer always conformed, as that of a scholar and a gentleman might be expected to conform, to the best traditions and decorum of the pulpit. It sought no adventitious furtherance through political or social topics in vogue. Its purpose was a strictly religious purpose,—to promote the religious life. For other themes, other places. Since the gospel message in his apprehension was nothing less than man's chief concern, to so refined a sense of the befitting as his, any enhancement of the hearer's favor by piquant or diverting reference to other than religious themes could but seem to deserve an interdict. He never snared the applausive murmurs of a congregation by those cheap and illegitimate arousals of common interest in a matter then and there irrelevant. The integrity of his character was finely revealed in the sheer incapacity to be tempted into this most besetting of hortatory sins,—the last infirmity of many a noble orator.

Once, however, his appointment to deliver a discourse for the National Day of Fast, Friday, January 4, 1861, obliged him to select a topic appropriate to the hour,—namely, "American Citizenship,—its Faults and their Remedies,"—and dealing with the religious obligation of some political duties. The date recalls the memory of an overwhelming peril to the union of our States and to the spirit of the political structures constituted upon and

around the peoples' liberties and laws,—a peril then to be averted if ever; then, or else straightway to be undergone. By the methods of peace the peoples' political capacity did not suffice, through either party's instrumentality, to avert either peril—the peril to our Federal Union, or the peril to its informing spirit. By the coarse methods of war, to be sure, with every costly sequence, the union of States was rescued from disruption. The other, perhaps the graver peril, not peacefully averted, but actually enhanced by war, though successful or rightful, is far from overpast. It is already transforming the spirit of our civil polity. It beclouds the future of this great experiment of freedom. By mere continuance for nearly a quarter of a century, its chances and occasions are usurping the authority of sound, safe precedents; its calamities and catastrophies, by those who profit off them, are called the muniments of our freedom, the methods of our prosperity.

These are now commonplaces in the higher statesmanship of our political parties. They are mentioned here only to illustrate the breadth of Dr. Mercer's intellectual capacity. He foresaw what we are deploring. To-day, twenty-four years after its delivery, his published discourse \* may fitly rank with the speeches and letters of

---

\* "A Sermon for the Day of National Fast," January 4, 1861, by Alexander G. Mercer, D.D., Assistant Minister of Trinity Church on the Greene Foundation. Published by request. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1861. 8° pp. 40.—The impression made by this discourse was remarkable. One of the leading divines, in his own religious connexion, wrote of it: "It is be-

the two or three foremost political leaders of that time who clearly saw the end from the beginning, and rising to the highest levels of impassioned and patriotic statesmanship, strove, however vainly, to arouse their fellow-countrymen to cope with the exigencies of a momentous epoch.

The common scope and purpose of the sermons included in the present volume are obvious at a glance. They were written by Dr. Mercer for delivery from the pulpit; not with any thought of or preparation for the press. His executrix, into whose hands they fell, along with a large mass of his other sermons, memoranda, and papers, has been impelled by the urgency of many friends to permit their publication. They are but few among many, and may be deemed a selection inadequate to present the variety and height of his powers. Not, like the Fast Day address, do they strike the reader

---

yond comparison the most masterly and effective of any thing I have seen, and every way worthy of the theme and the crisis. It stirs like a trumpet, revives like a sunrise, and overpowers like the truth." A political leader in a neighboring State, who had never heard of him before, wrote with elation: "You have beaten our Senators and public men hollow, and I for one concede to you a prominent position among the very first and best men of our land." Of those from men no longer living, and of another religious connexion, a letter from the Rev. Dr. N. L. Frothingham may serve for instance. He wrote: "I read it not only with attention, but with emotion, and more admiringly than it would be quite delicate for me to dwell upon. It quite filled up my idea of what a sermon on such a subject ought to be. I was struck with its boldness, freedom, and originality. I liked its sound doctrine and fervid spirit, its beauty and its strength. Its fine blending of the patriotic impulse with the loftiest religious sentiment seemed to me to carry the pulpit just far enough into the forum." Bishop Alonzo Potter wrote: "I have seen nothing so bold, truthful, and impressive."

with the solidity and large grasp of his understanding; nor do they recall the force of utterance, its apt and copious torrent, the noble port, the fire of eye, the sweet commanding voice, when a rising tide of deep and powerful emotion seemed to break with successive shocks against the very barriers of speech. Nevertheless—(and this is the reason of her selection)—they do present a kind and degree of power not usually found except among the dramatists of past days or the novelists of the present day. Not the form of expression that they choose for exhibiting the varieties and play of human character in act or speech is here alluded to, but that vivid vitalizing perception of a whole character and individuality signified to such discernment as theirs by slight marks, brief utterances, and single acts. Like the naturalist, constructing by the scientific use of his imagination, the class, form, and dimensions of an extinct or unknown animal from the fragments of a few bones, or from their impress left in a stone matrix, these gifted ones can re-create from a phrase, a choice, an action, in an environment barely sketched, the human being's type of character, almost his temperament and pedigree, if not his personal history. Their intuitions appear infallible, their insight of motives, habits, tendencies, relations is so penetrating and just, that it seems to border on the supernatural. In life this is another gift than in literature. Human nature for the most part being, in the language of a great philosopher, "the dull, leaden-

hued thing it is," the bubble, humanity, so rarely attaining iridescence; so few the bright exemplars of a higher life revealing nobler possibilities of being and doing: it may well be doubted if this gift of insight now confers more of happiness upon its possessor than of unhappiness. Its possession may, perchance, account for that undertone of sadness sometimes heard in the later years of Dr. Mercer's life, when youth and youthful energies had passed, by the few whom he honored with his intimacy and less reserved speech. At least such a gift of insight, such a vitalizing perception of the implications of character in speech and act, may explain the uncommon charm of the series of discourses here gathered from the heaps of his manuscripts, and grouped together.\*

---

\* Since the types above were set, that admirable novelist, who as a critic also is almost without rival, has discussed (*The Art of Fiction*, *Longman's Magazine*, Sept., 1884) the power spoken of, in the better manner of a genius who has it. To quote a passage from Henry James, jr., is doubly fitting here, since, between Henry James, sr., his father, and Dr. Mercer, the friendship was lifelong, and, while both resided in Cambridge or in Newport, their daily intimacy was a chief delight of both.

"The faculty which, when you give an inch, takes an ell, \* \* \* for the artist is a much greater source of strength than any accident of residence or of place in the social scale. The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it—this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience. \* \* \* Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative—much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius—it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations."



In respect to some of the characters observed upon, the direct statements, the certain intimations conveyed in the testament narratives, are extremely few and slight. But their whole value is perceived. Threads of evidence become a web of proof. There was no unusual preparation for these discourses, except what is implied in knowing the results of modern scholarship, and by a practised familiarity with the critical apparatus of literary, historical, and biblical study. And all this was a kind of learning rarely by Dr. Mercer in the pulpit put to any but a silent use. These are guides to insight, but not the power to see; these are safeguards against error, but they are not vision. Yet for such intuition of human character as his, a slight trace, a faint intimation is enough. With certainty and ease he produces the full extent and significance of the scriptural lines, lays out their implications, re-creates, as it were, their temporal environment and that spiritual world of which they form a part but imply the whole, until the portrait of Caleb coming from Eshcol has the life-like solidity of that of David, psalmist and king, and all Gallio seems known to us no less than the character of Saul of Tarsus.

Certainly it is an earlier school of exegesis that is manifest, for example, in the two sermons on John the Baptist, than appears in that fluctuating image of him, his place, his function, his character, in the first and latest editions of Renan's "*Vie de Jésus*." The teleology of the one is frank, unconscious, perhaps excessive. But

how vastly more solid and luminous in respect to all that the most destructive criticism of the other leaves untouched,—the characters of the historical persons, of the actual John, of the authentic Jesus,—is the fine fruit of this genius for insight, this intuitive perception of character and motive, working upon the fragmentary memorials of their intercourse and acts, than is the final outcome of the wide learning and labored reconstructions of the great French critic. Compare their interpretations of that perplexed and perplexing message from the prison: "Art thou he that should come; or look we for another?" The kingdom not come, incestuous Herod throned, the dancing girl's demand, the laden charger. The critic sees the Baptist's troubled doubt. The preacher divines the forerunner's consistent greatness.

This difference is more than a difference. It involves, of course, not merely degrees of insight into human character and the evidences of it. It involves diverse conceptions of human character. In Renan's discussion of scriptural character and incident, the supernatural is distinctly discredited and dissolved out. That is one method and process of his interpretation. These discussions of scriptural character and incident follow another scheme. The depths and heights of the human heart are penetrated and unveiled.

Now most men who know the nether depths of the human heart become incredulous of its upper and diviner airs. Most men who part with their illusions lose their

ideals. The discerning reader may see that the writer of these sermons was one whose vanished illusions had left him with finer ideals.

Such indeed was his character, ever conscious of the infirmity of human nature, ever refreshing his aspirations at the sources of its strength. An exquisite high spirit breathed forth in him throughout the commonest intercourse of daily life. A most refined and just feeling was the atmosphere in which his intellect lived and moved and spoke; it was habitual, unforced. It gave to his moral judgments their perspicuity, to his intellectual judgments their breadth. These were never uncertain and deprecatory, but simple, confident, candid, and strong with the strength of superiority.

The physical concomitants of sensibilities so acute as his were sometimes a burden. Extreme heat was intolerable to him; the atmospheric influence of approaching storms was often a mental exacerbation. But these were private inconveniences not often perceived by others in his solitary life. They increased, maybe, his habit of seclusion, confirmed him in the preferences of a recluse, and reinforced his choice of the climate of Newport as a residence in his later years.

His society of course was much sought by others from the earliest years of his youth. It must be said that he less frequently sought the society of others himself. His visits were brief, his departures almost abrupt. He never lingered after rising to go, but was away in a moment

upon the parting word. The cultivated, refined, accomplished, were the most reluctant to indulge him in his habitual seclusion. Their guests, of whatever sort of distinction, he was among the first to be invited to meet, as if the recognition had been universal that his fit companions were the foremost in every walk of life. Such tributes are unusual to solitary men, or to reserved men, and he was both solitary and reserved. He was of the most reserved of men without especially appearing to be such. Without feeling that any thing due had been withheld, anybody could on reflection see that nothing which was only personal and merely private had been obtruded. You were left to infer the individual, if possible, from his topics, his admirations, his attitude to life. Yet in every variety of social intercourse his presence was felt as a force and a fascination. Tall, finely-proportioned, and of most attractive aspect, distinction was his chief mark both in person and bearing. Crawford, the sculptor, being in Newport during the summer of 1858 or 9, chanced one Sunday to hear Dr. Mercer during his rectorship of Trinity church, and made the sermon and the preacher the text of an interesting letter to George Sumner, the accomplished brother of the famous Massachusetts senator. "Looking as an artist," he wrote, "I was compelled to admire ; every movement was graceful ; his manner, so strong, so earnest, so full of dignity, had the unconscious perfection of a work of art. There was real philosophy and practical wisdom in all he said,

along with great beauty of expression ; and his earnestness gave force and fire to the whole."

It is easy to see that the social intercourse in which he shared would unavoidably take a higher tone. The pettinesses and insincerities of society went out of fashion in his presence. He carried along with him the atmosphere of his own elevation and the companions of that world in which he silently moved. But to the company of his living friends this brought a fresh delight, not a novel restraint. His newest acquisition, his oldest admirations among the past events and worlds of men, he imparted to them. With them he shared his best intimacies among

"The dead but sceptred sovran who still rule  
Our spirits from their urns."

No man having high endowments can remain quite ignorant of the fact through all the collisions and comparisons of life ; but possession of exceptional powers, if joined with moral elevation, is not only consistent with a genuine humility, it often wears that extreme grace. In him, like his rank of character, it was apparent. Quite rarely did he speak of himself ; never did he begin to do so, or prolong the subject. This was true, indeed, of his intercourse with very intimate friends. Egotisms, small or great, direct or obverse, were among his confirmed moral incapacities. Of course he never flattered, or in any other

wise departed from the utmost sincerity of behavior. It would seem to those who knew him best, and these were they who loved him most, as if human nature had no more to show of self-respect and respect for others. In one of the sermons on Paul, as in another passage or two, his appreciation of the gentler sex finds expression. It appeared also in his manner toward them, which had a certain high-bred old-school courtesy.

Without presuming to qualify the description above given by Bishop Alonzo Potter of Dr. Mercer as a "thinker and talker of extraordinary powers" it may be observed, that while his familiar talk did not lack the spice of a wise wit, it was rarely humorous, or the cause of humor in others. Yet a better relish, a keener appreciation of the wit, the wisdom, the humor of others, might have been sought but not found. His laughter in a suitable case was free, open-hearted, infectious. But as for his own talk it was removed from lightness always, and in general, grave. His capacity for righteous indignation was immense, for "he loved righteousness and hated iniquity," but he was fastidious in his choices out of the armories of speech, where every weapon seemed at his command, and irony, satire, denunciation were weapons which he rarely permitted himself to wield. Their drawbacks he well knew, their inutility, except in rare conjunctures, their adverse force toward "the two noblest of things"—(as that one perfect master of irony said who was also friend of the best master of satire in

the two centuries preceding ours)—“the two noblest of things, sweetness and light.” But those charitable judgments upon erring individuals, which are extolled in the supreme eloquence of the wrathful Apostle, were more familiar to his spirit, and often made a touching exhibition of its habitual frame.

The reserve above ascribed to Dr. Mercer's character became apparent to all whom his last will and testament first apprised that his public and conspicuous life had exhibited but half his powers; that the silent employ of other powers as rare, though inconspicuous, and commonly deemed incompatible with these, had sufficed him, in the course of a life not very long, to amass a large estate, to withhold its acquirement from the knowledge, the misconceptions, and the envy of men, and to meditate and prescribe its posthumous distribution (after making it ensure the life-long comfort and ease of a few cherished and surviving friends) as “a gift for purposes both public and benevolent, inspired by the simple love of man as man, and by a desire for their permanent good.” \* Paley is not the only clergyman who has had a hard-

---

\* So says the learned and upright Chief-Justice Durfee, rendering the decision of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island upon a bill in equity asking the instructions of the court as to the duties of the executrix of his will, and confirming all its beneficent provisions:—a hospital in Philadelphia, a hospital in Boston; scholarships or foundations at Harvard, Yale and elsewhere for poor public school students of the best ability and character; and other works of religion and benevolence—none of these benefactions to bear his own name, but only the “name of ‘Hall,’ the name of my beloved mother and brother.”

headed liking for and an innate insight into the theory of business, as Ricardo's is not the only metaphysical mind which has found upon the bourse, in the "commerce of imperceptibles, of all trades the most abstract," a field for its refined and native vigor. But the sagacious sense which fixes upon the one scheme that will return profit among the ninety-nine schemes that promise profit, the cool eye which sees and foresees the trepidations of the market, is not common to scholars, metaphysicians, or savants,—whose affair is rather with general laws and the philosophy of things. Among learned and bookish men, a Grote, Bagehot, or Lubbock, who can make a fortune in business, is as rare as a Neckar, Ricardo, Cobden, or Goschen in the market-place, who can discourse wisely of the principles of finance and the laws of trade. Noteworthy, therefore, is Dr. Mercer's possession of powers so exceptional at once and so diverse, as those which illustrated his public career and these which his will attested and disclosed; but more noteworthy his employ of both. Neither was suffered

"To rest unburnished, not to shine in use."

And the objects of each employ were one and the same.

It is a deadly stroke in that posthumous suicide—the "Reminiscences of Carlyle," where the fuliginous but far from smoke-consuming Scot describes himself standing at Hyde Park corner and railing at the gilded passing throng. "Once or twice," he says, "among the flood of equipages



at Hyde Park corner I recollect sternly thinking"

"Yes, and perhaps none of you could do what I am at." \*

The whirl and glitter of wealth is as gay in Newport upon Narragansett Avenue any summer afternoon. But the gray-haired clergyman whose daily walk led him across the track of its wheels, was not thus blinded to the qualities of a thing by the glare of its defects. Wealth, in his own words "too often turns humility into pride, makes selfish the generous, and hardens the tender." But his great heart could be tried by nothing so base and palpable. For him, an implicit faith betrayed might have been searching,—not wealth. Its use, importance, responsibility, he knew. It was but another trust. Though a power which may demoralize in the getting, and the having, or be squandered in the using, he knew it also for a power which endows human life with its leisure, its ennobling arts, most of its unsordid pursuits and plans of far-reaching beneficence. And so, obliterating his own to perpetuate a dearer name, and from first to last precluding personal thanks or praise, he silently transmuted a life of anxious yet pleasing toil to assuage the sickness and suffering of the poor, and to promote the studies of indigent but worthy and aspiring youth—himself reanimate thus in generations yet unborn.

If "the style is the man," it should be observed that

---

\* "Reminiscences" by Thomas Carlyle, p. 412. Cf. "Carlyle's Life in London," vol. iii., p. 158 et passim, and "Some Personal Recollections of Carlyle," by Henry James, senior, *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1881.

Dr. Mercer's style is but partially shown in the present volume, though not seldom shown at its best. For here the style was of the pulpit, and he was master also of an admirable written style. Here is a spoken, not a written style, and in that kind these discourses are certainly models of a high value. But there is no kind so difficult. Though written by the lamp they read like a good stenographer's report of a public address ; and this is the special sort of praise—more or less high, as the case may be—appropriate to the masterpieces of Greek and French oratory. There is great freedom, easy precision, and that best of merits,—such entire lucidity that nothing but the subject treated of shines through it or attracts attention. It is quite devoid of any ostentation of its power. The art and patience which formed such a style have long passed out of sight in the unconsciousness of swift and daily use. The “studious and philosophic mind” is betrayed if one will take pains to trace the method, the logic, the cogency of the preacher ; but not by that familiar fault, an exhibition of its processive steps instead of the relations of the subject discoursed of. The chips of the workshop, the labor and learning of the workman, are as completely concealed as the art which conceals them.

The “cant of the tabernacle” is a scoff that would never have been invented to disparage pure religious fervor, if every preacher had known as an art what he felt as a power, the enshrining of the deepest religious

emotion in that marvel of English literature, King James' version. But words and phrases, the most sacred in any scripture, the most pithy in any cause, tend to become polarized in their popular use and common contexts, the more completely as the current of feeling flowing through them is the stronger. It is a secret of the literary art to relieve them of this disability, to restore their primitive force, to renew their original charm. The sane half of John Foster's best essay, "On the aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion," shows the Baptist weaver scenting this secret, but Dr. Mercer knew it all. In his quotations of the *ipsissima verba* of the two Testaments there is an extreme felicity,—a felicity not wholly due to their appositeness, but to his exact and delicate appreciation of that perfect coinage in its actual value,—oft obscured if not impaired in the familiar commerce of the sanctuary and religious society. And so an old text was set in the way to make a new revelation.

Here, as when remarking his perception of the play of character, it might go without saying, that the Bible and Shakspeare were the best-thumbed two books in all his well-stocked shelves. But the margins of Wordsworth's page record his profound sympathy with that great poet of nature and the soul of man. The few who ever shared his long walks by the Newport cliffs and beaches, and with him, "in the love of nature, held communion with her visible forms," have heard her various language

spoken forth again in tones and words so memorable that for them they must blend forever with the sunset skies, the starlit nights, and the running white surf upon far-off ledges, above and around that enchanting isle. What was mortal in him is now blended with its dust.

MANTON MARBLE.

BAR HARBOR, MAINE,  
*August, 1884.*



## ABRAHAM.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of the country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.—GEN. xii., 1.

HISTORY begins with Abram. Before, it was as great broken fragments standing in the desert of the early world. In the text begins, it may be said, the history of Abram,—the first glimpse of a figure which, though only that of a simple shepherd, has proved too vast for distance to hide or for time to obscure. The history of the departure from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan began before this. His father, Terah, made the first movement, but reached no farther than Haran, "and dwelt there," and there died. His migration, perhaps, was from ordinary motives, and led with ordinary vigor, and so was cut short. Possibly, however, it was prompted by something of the same high instinct as Abram's, but weaker; and if so, it is another illustration of the interesting fact, that sometimes in the obscure parents of chosen men may be seen (as if in preparation) the rough and rudimentary outline of the great character and destiny yet to come. However this may be, the son, under some divine instigation, took up the purpose which had dropped from the hands of Terah, and "de-

parted, as the Lord had spoken unto him." So he moves westward, reaches Canaan, and begins in his family that nation, and that history, which is the standing astonishment of the world.

In the account of Abram there seems no tendency to exaggerate. If we remember that a nation here describes its father and founder, it is remarkable to see the simplicity, soberness, and naturalness of the story. Josephus speaks of him as a Chaldean conqueror, and learned in all the mathematics and astronomy of Egypt; and the traditions of Abram in Arabia and in the East (very ancient and venerable) are in striking contrast with the domestic and family story in the Book of Genesis. There, it is a tradition of a mighty chieftain, bringing to the West his Chaldean learning of the stars. But here is nothing of this,—not one word as to that great journey, or its adventures,—whereas the faults of the man are fully laid open.

Still, some people reject this account because of its miraculous and mythical aspect. As to that, the style of the supernatural, whenever it really appears here, is of such sort as becomes God, and is vindicated also by the grandeur of the occasion. When, for example, the great and eternal covenant is to be ratified, Abram sees in the darkness of the night, passing between the divided pieces, in the usual way when contracts and covenants were made,—he sees a smoking furnace and a burning lamp.

Usually, however,—indeed, almost entirely,—there is nothing out of the common way except the intercourse, the familiar talk, between God and Abram; for it is the picture of a man literally “walking with God.” Abram speaks to God, and God to Abram, as a man speaks to his friend; and it seems almost as if the innocent time were brought back when God walked “in the garden in the cool of the day.” It was this peculiar nearness and confidence which gave Abram the name of “the Friend of God,”—“El Khalil,” *the friend*, as the common Arab calls him to-day.

Now if any one is sceptical as to this, even as the most sceptical, and regards this as the form—and only the form—in which the strong convictions and intense realization of those times conceived these things,—merely the externalizing, the tendency to make outward the facts of the heart; yet is it not possible that souls which trusted God as Abram did, which felt His actual presence in every better movement of the heart,—supposing, I say, that they did reflect outward the flashings of their own conscience, as lightnings projected upon the face of the heavens, and said: “There! God!” instead of “God here!”—I say, is it not possible, after all, that this form of conceiving is the best form,—that this way of thinking is truer than our science?

But grant it is *not*, and grant that the sons of God are always under delusion as to these matters, why on that account does any one make light of these histories, which



contain as their substance, in any view, such a discovery of God, such a picture of what a man ought to be, as is not found elsewhere, and is, in fact, "a light shining in a dark place,"—that is to say, is the true guide and religion of the world, even though the supernatural lustre which covers the whole *is* a mere delusion? Whoever may object:—to me, these narratives which tell of men who were often in company with God, heard His very words, went this way and that as He said, are, even in their form, venerable and sacred, and are the most touching and delightful tales the ears can hear. If it were not, it ought to have been, the primitive state of man; and essentially I certainly believe it will be the final state, whenever man reaches true wisdom and a filial heart. The time, I say, will come. There will be no need, of course, of a bodily form or a human voice, but a presence so *real* that the senses can add nothing to it; when "the pure in heart shall see God,"—nothing less,—and shall say, as the first man Adam said: "On this mount He appeared; under this tree stood visible; among these pines His voice I heard; here with Him at this fountain talked."

There are two ways of misconceiving such ancient Bible characters as Abram. Christian people and theologians, on the one hand, are often quite unhistorical. Forgetting all the differences of time and place,—forgetting that revelation began as a dawning day, with imperfect ideas and imperfect morals also,—we persist in

giving those men a modern conscience, all the Christian lights and virtues, and reading in their minds that which belongs to ours. Now this is not only untrue and foolish, and so subjects the Bible to fault-finding; but, instead of exalting these spiritual forefathers of the race, it is unjust to them. We can never appreciate their elevation but by knowing their limitations and ignorance,—that they were streams sometimes darkened by shadows of earth, while reflecting an image of heaven. This on the one hand. On the other, they err much more who irreverently, and ignorant of the Spirit, will see nothing here but an every-day matter. If you go into the East to-day and observe an Arab chief,—his gravity, patriarchal dignity, hospitality,—you may see a striking image of the old Abram. Yes; and something more than outside likeness,—a something really similar in character. But to stop with this and to omit the mighty Abram within, is much farther from truth than our ordinary way of looking at him as if he were a moralist or theologian of the Christian era.

I might illustrate all this by details as to Abram, but I can only speak in a general and superficial way. Though he is surrounded by little exterior grandeur, the impression is of a princely, and even an imperial person. The narrative does not hide traits of weakness, and, shall I say it? even meanness,—such as the crafty and unmanly tale to Pharaoh (still we must remember that cunning and prudence were an early form of virtue),

—traits which remind us of his grandson Jacob ; but in general the impression is of a noble person, specially of calm power, all the more interesting because it sometimes breaks out into fiery decision and brilliant action ; as, for example, in his sudden and masterly defeat of the kings, where we see a patriarchal shepherd and herdsman transmuted in a moment into a warrior and a conqueror. In general we see repose, and a sort of large majesty, which distinguish him broadly from the somewhat insipidly calm Isaac on the one hand, and from the disturbed, spasmodic Jacob on the other. He was also a wise and energetic master of his worldly affairs, and we find in him that strong element of secularity and practice which is so opposite to the life of mere contemplation, and which has marked his race ever since. Yet how contrasted is this, as it appears in the character of Abram, with the small and passionate and selfish thought of Jacob, who (I mean on his worldly side) is the true father of the common Jew ! As a result, Abram, a rich man and powerful, and yet “a pilgrim” ! Of all the models for the prosperous men of this prosperous place and century, Abram is the finest,—laying hold on life with so powerful a grasp, yet confessing that he was “a stranger and a pilgrim,” that here he had “no continuing city.”

It was this simple, massive, serene character of Abram which kept him so steady to his ideas, and which gave him his peculiar power to keep others steady also. “I know him,”—this is God’s testimony,—“I know him,

that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." We seem to see one of such rectitude and majesty of will that he himself moved, and moved all around him, easily, in the line which the finger of God had marked. Indeed, such an impression does he give of a power of benign command, that it is saying very little to say that the world lost in him one of its greatest natural kings. And then, observe (it is quite congenial with the strength of his nature) his quiet ease and forbearance in family quarrels, such as occurred about Sarah and Hagar, or in the quarrel between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of his nephew Lot. How fine and generous his settlement of that difficulty:—"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere," and selfishly took it, and left the ungrasping Abram to his generosity and rectitude, and to the favor of God.

In all this, however refined we may think our civilization, Abram is a model and rebuke for us,—a model in domestic dignity and kindliness and neighborly justice. Taking the word in its best sense, do we often see such a gentleman as Abram was,—such a head of a house-

hold? Do we often see such a neighbor in forbearance and justice? But best of all his human traits was his silence. Perhaps his life was mightier in its effects than that of any other mortal man ; yet it was a life of deeds, not words. Abram was the great silent prophet, who taught, and sent his influence through the world, by what he did and was. What a lesson for the silent masses of mankind !

How much in such a character, you will say, was no doubt owing to natural temperament and wisdom ! True ; but every quality was expanded and carried higher by that central and singular distinction in him,—his faith. The “faith of Abraham” has become a by-word of the world. Faith was before him,—the sublime faith of Enoch and of Noah ; but to him is accorded the unparalleled dignity of beginning it on a grand scale, and of becoming the Father of the Faithful ; that is, his was such a soul of faith that he was selected and made, as it were, the fountain and root of a seed and race of faith (that was the purpose), the father of a people whose mark should be faith, whose very standard of manhood should be “the faith of their father Abraham,”—who should hold up to the world a picture of simple trust and of its wonderful effects, that thus Abram might foreshadow that Being who Himself, by a like and fuller power of filial trust, wrought all the marvels of faith, and finally carried Himself, and will carry all who share His Spirit, up through sin, through death itself, to life. A

wonderful story!—but only the story of Abram repeating itself on a grander scale,—that old story of a Chaldean shepherd who by faith carried himself and all his, from distant and outer lands, to the land of promise and rest.

It is not my purpose, however, to speak of the great scheme of faith, but simply of its beginning in the faith of Abram. Pause and think of that. A simple and hardy shepherd, living in Haran, to the north and east, received some monition, I need not say what, that the God, whose idea filled his soul, commanded him away, far to the south and west. “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.” He moves “as the Lord hath spoken unto him,” “not knowing whither he went,”—he moves—through what hindrances we know not; but they did not stop him,—through what delays we know not; but no forgetfulness or wavering or sinking of will! Ordered onward, onward he goes. Now, at last, he is there; but no foothold. He still journeys, a sort of natural pilgrim. Possession is reserved to his posterity! A strange disappointment! It seemed almost as if he were paltered with,—all this done, endured, and the promise not kept. Yet he still believes, and his hopes are now for his posterity. But time goes on, and he grows old, childless, and the thing becomes impossible. This at last staggers him. What can surpass the truth and interest

of that chapter in which the Lord says to him: "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Taking him out under the Eastern heavens,—“Look now toward heaven,” (Is there any thing more beautiful in literature? is there any thing more dramatic and sublime?) “and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.” So he gives him in his old age a child, even Isaac. And now all is righted, and splendid promises and hopes are his! But the stern discipline of his life has yet one great, unequalled trial for him,—the last, the highest; shall I not say the highest ever met by mortal man?—the command: “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Whatever objections may be made, one thing is clear; imagination cannot devise any thing beyond it, as just the test to bring forth all that was in the man, and to illustrate forever the possibilities of the heart in the region of faith. But what a proposal! This at last! How could it be done? It could be done and was done only by a man who had such a supereminent sense of the sacredness and charm of God's will, that for it he could

go against all things! Here was the occasion when at last all confidence, all affectionate trust in God must break and give way! The human heart cannot do this. Yes; the human heart, inspired by God's own Spirit, did it; and it remains forever a monument of the soul of man, grander to the eyes of God than the natural heavens and earth.

Abraham said nothing,—not one word. It was beyond all speech. He arose and took with him his son, his only son Isaac; and with whatever unutterable convulsions and pangs, yet held to God—and lifted the knife! It was just what Job said afterward: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

If we think of what he really knew of God, and the adoration and trust he gave to Him, and then of what we know of God, especially as one made unspeakably adorable in Christ, we shall see something vastly in Abraham's favor. He had but poor food to live on. It is startling to think how little truth he began with; yet such was the healthy energy of his heart that he drew from it the noblest health, while we, with our aged and sickly spirits, are starving on the richest.

If we were as faithful to the truth we are heirs to as Abraham was to his, I know not where or how high we should be carried! Then, the most striking fact was the pooriness of the truth and the grandeur of the heart. Now, the most striking fact is the grandeur of our truth and the poor response of the heart.



Let us do better,—at least a little. The same Spirit which was mighty then is mighty now. If He were willing then, He is willing now. Let us have faith. If we do but lift up our hearts to it, what is so natural, so congenial to our weakness, so divinely pleasing, as to be children and have a child's trust? A presence as solemn as ever Abraham saw walks with us; a voice talks with us. Listen. You hear nothing; but that silence is full of God and speaks. What says He in this holy silence? To each soul it first announces the great call: "Arise, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." What land? The broad land of uprightness and peace! And if we arise and move at the divine instigation, we shall hear (though all be silent), we shall hear that voice not less really than Abraham heard it; and in all the errors of our way it will be behind us, saying: "This is the way, walk ye in it." In the solitude of the night, and the despondency of the heart, when our hopes fail, we shall hear: "Fear not; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." And He will take us out under the heavens, and show us the stars, and tell us of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The speeches, the promises, the comforts of God are not reserved for Abraham, are not gone. It is only we who have waxed dull of hearing. He speaks. We also are His children. Doubtless He is also our Father.

If we but learned to listen to the eternal voice!—

learned constantly to go back out of the noise of the world into the silence, and to hear what the silence says; then we should make our religion a hushed, reverent, obedient listening to God,—no more !

## ISAAC.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.—GEN. xii., 3.

I HAVE often spoken of subjects connected with the early history of our race. I have done so partly because of the freshness and charm which that distant age brings to the present.

A well-known American author—Mr. Emerson—writes thus: "In York Minster, on the day of the enthronization of the new archbishop, I heard the service of evening prayer read and chanted in the choir. It was strange to hear the pretty pastoral of the betrothal of Rebekah and Isaac, in the morning of the world, read with circumstantiality in York Minster on the 13th of January, 1848, to the decorous English audience, just fresh from the *Times* newspaper and their wine, and listening with all the devotion of national pride. That was binding old and new together to some purpose. The reverence for the Scriptures is an element of civilization. So here in England every day,—a chapter of Genesis and a leader in the *Times*."

Setting aside the irony as to the Englishman and his manners, he well notes the strange, sweet blending of the

past and the present ; but he fails to note with becoming reverence the great lessons which the latest age may learn from the simplest of the stories of this early time. One of them is before us this morning in the account of Isaac.

The character of Isaac is not prominent, and is not, perhaps, especially interesting. The interest is rather about him than in him. He is, for example, the only child of Abraham and Sarah,—of the unique and majestic Abraham and of the once beautiful Sarah, a woman with a woman's interest and a woman's faults, yet invested with a simple dignity as the "mother of nations," of whom the promise was that "kings of people" should come of her. Then Isaac is, besides, the great providential child of all that ancient history,—“the child of promise,” as he is called. For a long time the whole scheme of God seemed to wait for Isaac, and seemed ready to fail because of his absence. The honor of God seemed about to fail; and if we really enter into the thoughts and feelings of Abraham,—of the childless old man, who began to fear that the promises of God, that nations like the stars in number should come of him, were flatteries,—then this child Isaac (awaited with such strange feeling, and received at last with such triumphant joy) becomes clothed with a singular and sacred interest.

Again, see the peculiar light cast on this child, as placed by the side of his brother Ishmael,—the boy Isaac the head of the chosen people; the boy Ishmael

the head of that hardly less wonderful Arabian race ! And then the very sad but natural story of Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, cast out with her son because of Isaac. For "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian mocking." The bright, vigorous young Ishmael, "a slip of wildness," the father of Arabs, naturally mocked the quiet and somewhat tame boy Isaac, and that Sarah could not abide, so Hagar and her son were cast out, and Isaac was left without a rival.

See, again, the interest which attaches to Isaac because of the story of his marriage. Rebekah, "the damsel very fair to look upon," being in her own land and near her father's house, went down to the well to fill her pitcher. As she went to draw water among the company of Syrian virgins, she was divinely pointed out to the messenger of Abraham as the chosen wife of Isaac,—pointed out by her grace and beauty first, then conclusively by her gracious kindness. She says to the weary and thirsty messenger, "Drink, my lord," and, hastening to the well again, draws water for all his camels, saying, "We have provender enough for all the cattle," and adds that in her father's house there is "room to lodge in." Very just tests these of a kind woman, and one also of a prompt and energetic nature, as she was afterward proved to be.

But I hasten to the real subject : What was Isaac ? Difficult to say with accurate justice. The lines are so few in this primitive sketch of a human face that al-

most any likeness may be made out of it, according to our prepossessions, by reading between the lines, as we say. From the hints given, however, the critics have usually judged that Isaac was of a peaceable, amiable, and yielding temper, without much strength or elevation,—a quiet person, with many of the faults of passiveness. This is to be seen, they might say, in all his history. But I am not quite content with this view. In all the stories of Isaac's weakness, though I admit much, I see there is something more. The first great scene of his life, which was the scene of his intended sacrifice on Mount Moriah, where he seems so passive, is to me full of sacred submission rather. He journeys with his father for three days toward the mount, saying nothing, and when they alight at the foot of the mount, and Abraham lays on his son the wood for the sacrifice, the boy toils on and says nothing; but finally, near the place, "Isaac spake unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together"; and, though Isaac well understands, he utters no word while his father binds him, while he lays him upon the altar, upon the wood, and while the knife is lifted. Now if the sacrifice which Abraham made that day was in reality Isaac's childlike offering of himself, then

all that Abraham was to God, in sacred filial submission, all *that*, Isaac was to his father Abraham. Is this passiveness?

Again, later, when the beautiful Rebekah comes to be his bride, she finds him meditating in the field at the even-tide. Meditating at even is not the occupation of a rough and warlike chief; it may be physical passiveness, but it is life in the heart of a man.

Again, see the story as to the wells of water. You know what wells of springing water are to a pastoral people. Now, when Isaac finds that the Philistines have filled up the wells of Abraham his father, he says nothing, but quietly digs them out again, and calls them by the names his father had given them. Moreover he digs new wells; but his enemies, not content with their first mean act, say as to the new springs, "The water is ours," and contest these with him. They strive with him at the first, and he calls its name Esek (strife) and leaves it to them; and they strive with him at the second, and he calls its name Sitnah (hatred) and gives that up to them. No matter how often he had yielded, he was willing to yield again. If he had laboriously dug in a new place and found good water, and a quarrel came out of it, he stood on no rights, but again retired.

This may have been weakness, but I think not, and the inner spirit of the narrative confirms my belief. For as often as Isaac gave up, and wherever he went, an inner blessing seemed to follow him, and he always found

sweet water, and prospered. So his rough, quarrelsome neighbors finally give up their persecution and come and say: "Let us be friends; we see certainly that the Lord is with you." And he, without a grudge, welcomes them once more,—yes, and makes a feast for them. Then he digs his third well, and in the joy of his heart calls it Rehoboth (room).

Now, though I have said this much in vindication, I do not say of Isaac's character in general that it is in the highest style, or without great fault. Infirmities all through there are; and the greatest virtue he has is constantly near to weakness. All that I admit. Isaac was no perfect man. He deceived others as Abraham did, and as Jacob did much more. I admit it. He could be coarse and sensual. I admit it. "And Isaac loved Esau because of his venison." And when Jacob counterfeited Esau, and fed the old man with "savory meat" and gave him sweet wine, Isaac then felt himself in a condition to transmit to him the sacred blessing. All coarse enough, to be sure, and yet quite natural,—indeed this was a common trait of the primitive man. The image of humanity was then made up of fine metals standing on legs of clay. Even his kindness and love could become weakness.

Now because of such faults—because the clear mountain water sometimes runs through mud—people forget the pure and sparkling element in the mud.

These early men, especially the patriarchs, were crude



types of the perfection and head of the race,—I mean Christ,—just as the lower forms of the creation are types of the higher. It is simply foolish to deny to lower ages something of the higher because men were yet but ignorant and sensuous. So, in spite of this or that superiority, great, grand roots were deep in all these fine old patriarchal figures. We may, and ought indeed, to prefer one to another (there is a choice among them), but each has some golden strain, some rich gold thread. I prefer Abraham,—perhaps I prefer even the Jew Jacob to Isaac; but still there is a peculiar sweetness in the gentleness of Isaac; and if we judged him by the old Hebrew test of excellence—namely, prosperity—he certainly stood high in the divine favor.

Few things are more pleasing than the picture of this gentle patriarch, yielding every thing and finding every thing; as if his history was an antique pictorial illustration of the very words, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." He yields his life on the altar on Moriah, and he finds it. In the strife he always gives up. A lamb among wolves, he conquers the wolves. By patience he is successful. And so "the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great,"—illustrating, so far back, the Hebrew saying, that to the good man "the very stones of the field shall be at peace." Ah! that our striving, grieved hearts, standing on our points of pride or interest, would cry, "Sitnah" (hate), and go away, though we lose the precious well, forgiving the

worst injustice by remembering the love and pity of God our Saviour toward us!

Do not misunderstand me and think I mean that peacefulness and yielding are always best and always deserve great blessings ; though in general I wish that from our wells of strife we would remove and again remove. Yet we must not forget that there are things over which we should stand and strive. To be sure, the all-yielding Isaac was rewarded more than the warlike Abraham,—to be sure, Isaac led a far happier life than Jacob ; yet the character even of Jacob was higher ; and as to Abraham, he rises far above both. Mark this,—that, with all Isaac's happiness and fortune, he was not a special favorite with God ! I find no record that God ever speaks to him but once (though he speaks often to Abraham and Jacob), and then it is thus written : "And the Lord appeared unto Isaac at night and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father, and I will bless thee *for my servant Abraham's sake*." It was Abraham, capable of war, that God loved best.

Now, though I have, as was necessary, done justice to the sweetness of Isaac, yet do not forget that it is the generous, disturbed, warring souls (though they have little peace) that bear up the ark of the Lord in their awful hands. Erasmus contrived to be at peace with many people, his days through ; but what was he to the warlike Luther ? Peace and prosperity are no tests. Isaac, the happiest, was by no means the greatest, of the

patriarchs. I rate him high, to be sure, but I rate far higher Abraham, who was capable of "the slaughter of the kings."

And now one thing more, and then an end. Those ancient men, as compared with us moderns, were far more *religious* men, but less moral. For morals—that is, right conduct between man and man—require long experience and education ; and in this Abraham was yet a child. He did things, and as a matter of course too, which every true man to-day would feel to be wrong. But the patriarchs, in their sense of God,—that is, in religion,—were alive, while we are, I may say, dead. For even Isaac, though a less religious man than the Jewish Jacob,—yet even Isaac in his religion towers above the modern Christian time. A sense of the presence of God is to us almost a lost faculty and a lost divine art. God has become a law ! We cannot even distinctly recall how the patriarchs felt. Sitting alone during a thunder-storm lately, I got a glimpse for a moment of the way of feeling of primitive men, or even of a North American Indian, but especially of the inspired Hebrews,—their deep sense of the present God. Yes ; God's presence was all through to them. They saw Him, they heard Him, they almost touched Him. He was visible, a visible Person at work, through all this scene of human life. Listen to the way those old people talked : "He sendeth forth his commandment : his word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool : he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes." Yes ; to them

His authentic voice speaks in the thunder ; the lightning is a gleam of His indignant eye. Yet His tender mercies are over all His works. He giveth to the beast his food , He listens to the young ravens when they cry. He stops at the voice of sorrow, and healeth the broken in heart.

Now, with this Presence, sometimes awful, sometimes sweet, the patriarchs walked. They meditated of Him in the quiet even-tide. They often erred and went wrong ; but God was their Friend and everlasting portion. O refined and thinking men of the nineteenth Christian age ! do you find a deep want after all ? I will tell you why : We have lost God ! Go back ! go back ! Find Him again ; and in the power of this restored fact you will find a strength above humanity ; in the fact of God your Friend you will find your “ exceeding great reward,” —in all disturbance a fathomless consolation, filling life with peace, and the grave with hope ! Amen.

## JACOB AND ESAU.

GENESIS XXVII.

THE birthright, the right of the first-born, was, you know, a sacred right through Jewish history, and indeed in much other history, even to this moment, and carried with it dignity and advantage. So high was the dignity among the Jews, that it gave one of His titles to the Messiah,—the “Prototokos,” the first-born, the Heir.

This birthright in the family of Isaac belonged to Esau; but, being hungry and faint one day, Jacob tempted him to sell his birthright for a mess of food, and then, by a bold deception of Jacob and his mother, the old and blind Isaac conferred the mysterious, and, as it seems, irreversible blessing of the patriarchs upon Jacob, mistaking him for Esau. So Jacob, “the supplanter,” supplanted his brother in all that was most valuable.

I must acknowledge, speaking for myself, that as to all this the heart turns against Jacob, and the feeling is, “Thou hast it now, but thou play’dst most foully for it.”

Esau, a rough, bold hunter,—a mere child of nature,—comes in faint and hungry from the chase, and sees before him the tempting mess of red-red pottage. He wants it

with the hunger of the savage ; and Jacob, artfully seizing the moment of his weakness, proposes to sell it to him for his birthright. Esau yields, for he says, " Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me? "

Then, as to getting the father's blessing, the matter is still worse. Jacob deludes the blind man, for the eyes of Isaac have become dim ; the son abuses the confidence of the helpless father ; he counterfeits, and with the "savory meat," and with the "rough hair" of his hands, selfishly wins the blessing. A bad transaction,—faithless to the father,—faithless to the brother,—over-reaching those of his own household ; and not in a small matter, but in the highest. It was all done in cool blood, too,—no bad feeling. Esau had not been a bad or cruel brother. True, his habits were alien from Jacob's. " Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field," while " Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents." But Esau, though a man of the field, was not a bad man. Far from it. Did you ever read a more touching scene than when he returns and finds the blessing gone from him? " And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father! And Isaac said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father! And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept."

Here was a man of fresh and primitive feelings. Yes ; and he was also as open and kindly and forgiving as a child. He hated, to be sure, the brother by whom he had been robbed, and he purposed to kill him ; but when, long after, that brother who had so cruelly wronged him, and fled from his wrath, was returning from a distant land, and when Esau went forth with four hundred men to meet him and to destroy him, they met ; eye looked into eye ; Esau saw his brother bow submissively before him ; Jacob was in his grasp ; the birthright could be redeemed by a blow ; but Esau lost all his sense of injury and wrong in one brotherly remembrance. " He ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Yes ; and when the rich Jacob, overjoyed at this reception, pressed gifts upon the poor hunter, Esau said : " I have enough, my brother ; keep that thou hast unto thyself." This is Esau. And this, we may say, is the last we see of him. He disappears here, and yields as if to the high fate of his brother Jacob.

All this, so far, looks very well for Esau and badly for Jacob. But, well as it looks for Esau, it is not so well as it seems. This simple and generous person was, after all, very much a creature of impulse, the sport of the moment, wanting in self-control and poise, wanting in purpose and on-looking reason ; indeed wanting also, I think, in the higher side of character, the religious side. For the sacredness of the birthright was a part of the patriarchal religion, and so a high sense of this right was one of the high-

est tests of a man in that day. Yet Esau yielded it up, not only without self-control, but with an air which showed no permanent sense of its value. "I am dying of hunger," he said, "and pottage is of more worth than birthright." He was merely hungry, yet this bold hunter was so effeminately weak that he exaggerated that into this: "I am on the point to die." He was a man whose present impulse or wish seemed all in all to him; a creature of the moment; and distant things, however high, seemed naught to him. "What good will this birthright do me?"

Now just this trait, the exaggeration of the value of a low and present impulse, and the belittling of the high and distant, marks the most fatal defect of human nature. Every sinful, mean, and base act ever committed comes of just this, that the present appetite or wish seems a great matter. We are ready to die without it, while God and holiness, honor, the future, which are the birthright of every man as a son of God, seem an uninteresting or distant good. "What good?" we say, and turn our back and eat the red pottage, and forget that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"Thus Esau despised his birthright." Well, then, as it looks for Esau, it is not so well. And, bad as it looks for Jacob, it is not so bad. You know that Jacob and Esau were twins, which made the title of the first-born seem but little the better. You know also that there



was a sacred impression on the mother's mind that the younger was divinely selected for the first place; for before their birth she felt that the Lord had said unto her: "Two nations are in thy womb; and the one shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger." Although the prediction of the fact did not entitle her or her son to bring about its fulfilment, yet it makes some slight difference in the case. For we see even now that when a nation or a man once feels that it is "manifest destiny" to do a certain thing,—predetermined,—he feels free to do that thing, no matter how unjust it is. We see the same delusion in a thousand other cases. Shakespeare recognizes it in the great drama of "Macbeth." The prediction, "Thou shalt be king hereafter," did not justify the murder, but it seemed to give to it a certain supernatural countenance, marshalling the murderer the way that he was going. If this can be the case when the supernatural soliciting comes from below, how much more strong when it was felt to come from above,—from God Himself! Then remember, besides, that there was something not altogether evil in Jacob's passionate coveting of the birth-right. For it was a sacred good, and eagerly to appreciate it as he did was itself a sign of some fitness for it; while to despise it as Esau did marked the man as unworthy of it. Select two young men; whatever their other qualities and claims, if the one has a high sense of things, and the other is a sneerer, depend upon it that

that alone is enough to sink a great gulf of separation between them.

I repeat, then, Jacob's value of the birthright marked him as fit for it. But of course I know this did not justify his fraud and injustice in reaching the good; but in some degree, at least, the light which led astray was light from heaven. To these excuses add this: It was an age when there were but low ideas of justice in the earth, and when the chosen family, though somewhat enlightened, yet shared in the general morals of the time. That you must always keep in view. Don't transfer to that rude period the Christian feelings and ideas of to-day. The great law of *meum* and *tuum*—the right of justice—easily gave way to another right, which is also sacred to early times; namely, the right of strength and skill, even of skill in the form of clever deception,—the right of the ablest,—the rule of Rob Roy:

“ The good old rule, the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.”

It is true that Jacob was somewhat advanced beyond this. Yet in a case like this, where there were special excuses, I have no doubt Jacob saw his duty but dimly; for, such are our hearts, pretty good excuses, added to keen wishes, will justify almost any thing.

So much, then, in defence of Jacob. But now hear me for a moment in defence of that divine Providence which allowed the substitution of this particular man, Jacob, in

the place of this particular man, Esau, as the third of the patriarchs. The importance of a right choice here is not easily overrated. For several reasons the character of the patriarchs was to influence and mould the character of the Hebrew race more than could be done by any of the whole line of law-givers, princes, prophets, and warriors,—Moses, perhaps, excepted. To have the right man, then, was indeed important. But was Jacob he? or, at least, was he more fit than Esau? He was. What was Jacob? Let us see. A man may be described by three things,—whether he has ends,—what they are,—and how he reaches them.

First, whether he has ends. Esau had not. He was one of a class of characters who live without any distant ends to reach,—who live very much from day to day, working perhaps energetically for their little daily plans, or floating from interest to interest. These are not men at all, but children. Jacob was, above all things else, a man of purpose. He lived for what was distant, to which he subordinated the present and all its wishes. Esau was a child; Jacob was a man.

The next question about a man is, What are his ends? Two traits in a man's ends lift up the man,—the remoteness and the generosity of his ends. If very remote,—that is, if a man takes into his vision the whole scope of his life, and with a masterly power brings under his whole existence to that far-off end,—that man, even though his ends are selfish, is a superior person. Now Jacob was

certainly that man. Show me such a man anywhere, and I will show you his equal here. Seven years of the hardest service he served for Rachel, and counted them but as seven days,—and then seven more. He wore through twenty years of the hardest life, carrying on his design that he should be the successor and heir of Isaac, and though he was of a timid nature, never yielding that purpose, even when he stood in the presence of the avenger Esau himself. Never was there a more patient, tenacious soul. This was singular, for remember that primitive men may be persistent in passions, but not in purposes, save in that one passion and purpose, revenge. But Jacob had all the calmness and tenacity of an advanced age. His end, however, may have been a selfish one. Self-advancement? Yes. But, considering the age and place, self-advancement was one of the higher forms of virtue, especially when we know that the end Jacob sought had a certain sacredness about it,—the hope, namely, that he should be in the line of God's special favors,—should take eminent place as His servant.

The third test of a man is the means he uses to reach his ends. Jacob's were bad enough. Remember, however, that the rule, The end does not justify the means, was unknown to Jacob,—is, in fact, a great and modern discovery in morals, not fully known even yet. And remember, besides, that whatever his means were, they were always effective, and never gratuitously wicked.

On the whole, then, here was a mixed character as to its excellence, but a high character as to its ability. Nay, besides,—this very mixture, the very defects of character, made Jacob a fit instrument of the divine purposes. He was, even in his weakest points, far better fitted to lay the foundations of a family and kingdom than the impulsive and purposeless Esau. Had he been a more purely excellent man, he would have been less fitted. A style of character purely excellent cannot lay a permanent grasp upon the men of early ages, or men of any age not high enough to receive it. The powerful great man is the one who is at once above and yet along-side of his fellows. Hence we see, as a matter of fact, that among the patriarchs, though Abraham is most revered, Jacob has been the truly influential man with the Jewish masses. He has moulded the mass of the Jewish people into his own image. I regard this as specially providential. God gave to that race a father—a first one—Abraham, the man of faith, the man who laid hold on the invisible. He set him up forever before their eyes, and in every age of the world the better natures of that race turn to him. Of him Christ himself was but the fulfilment,—the second and greater Head of the children of faith. But the Jewish multitude in every age needed something lower than this,—higher than themselves, yet nigh to and like themselves, and so God gave them Jacob. Thus the purer and higher were led to God and held to God through the high spirit that

was in Abraham; the body were held to God and their religion through the lower soul of Jacob. They could be inferior Jacobs when they could not be properly children of Abraham. If any man should ask me, therefore, to account for that miracle, the Jewish people, I should name the congenial character of Jacob as one of the chief causes. So, through lower and higher instruments, the purposes of God are worked out.

Among the thoughts suggested by the subject, notice first the effect of success in the judgment of character. Esau, once gone under, holds no place. As soon as Jacob becomes a patriarch Esau becomes a wretch. As soon as a cause or a character sinks, a hue-and-cry is raised. The Rabbins paint Esau so strangely you would not know him. He is made to give his father dog's flesh; he tries to bite his father, etc. So it is always: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given." Success settles all. Talk of the sober judges of history! There are none such.

Notice, again, how poorly we judge of mixed characters. A few people, looking at some act in Jacob's life, form a contemptuous impression as to him; while most people, looking only at his patriarchal dignity and his better side, cannot read the story justly, but only see an imaginary patriarch all through, made up of faith and other religious qualities. Just so we judge each other. If some people hear that a murderer in his prison has shown any human feelings they are astonished, or if they

hear that a saint has done a disgraceful act they put him down at once as having been a hypocrite. But the same Jacob who overreached his father, his brother, and I might say destiny itself, the supplanter, the robber, who "from a shelf the precious diadem stole, and put it in his pocket,"—was yet the same who wrestled all night with God,—the same who worked as steadily, and with as keen an eye to his own interest, as any man covered with the dust and cares of a city thoroughfare,—was the man who "dreamed dreams and saw visions," and spent his night with the angels.

Truly we are all of different natures, marvellously mixed,—a worm, a god ! This should teach me at least some things, such as humility to myself. I know by this that the statues of the demi-gods stand on clay feet,—that my best moments, my best feelings, are but a part of me,—that I have a whole world of things to repent of, and to be ashamed of, before God. Yet it should also teach me to be hopeful as to this mixed soul of mine, and if the leaven of heavenly life is really in it, to be patient with myself while the slow work of redemption goes on.

That, and nothing of soul growth, was especially the fact with Jacob. His character was unlike that of the other patriarchs in this: Abraham and Isaac, such as we see them at first, are very much such as we see them at last. But Jacob only becomes his real, that is, his higher self at the last. At the bottom of his young and eager ambition and selfishness there was at the very first,

as I have said, something good, the root of a great tree of right,—namely, the real sense that God's blessing and favor were above all value,—and so in his blind, but most earnest way, he went to work to grasp them. But his heart was selfish, as well as aspiring; so he found trouble and sorrow and fear, as sin always finds, until in a great exigency, when he is about to stand face to face with his wronged brother, a real sense of himself is forced on him, and he wrestles all night in an agony, partly of sorrow for the past, partly of fear, partly of a wish for better things, and for help from God, until at the breaking of the day he gains the blessing. Thenceforth the man's higher nature gets the better; and so he goes on "from grace to grace" until his last days, when he appears in such serene dignity of victory, so tenderly repentant over the past ("Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been"), so tenderly trusting in the God of his father Abraham, so full of spiritual thoughts and hopes, that we can see that the secular and Jewish Jacob has become transformed into Israel the Prince of God.

There is one test every man should solemnly try himself by, one test of what our ultimate selves and our ultimate destiny will be,—Does the good part of our characters grow?

Again—and above all—observe, amid the defects of these patriarchs, what it was which gave them their eminence with God,—what it was which redeemed the passive and almost tame Isaac,—what it was which redeemed the



shrewd, unscrupulous Jacob. What is the peculiarity and distinction of the patriarchs? I answer: The element of religion. The weakest and poorest of them was a man of religion. What do I mean? People mean many foolish things by religion. The word religion means to be peculiarly tied or bound to the Highest. These men were legated and relegated, tied and tied over again, tied to the invisible God. They had ties upward. They were under bands to God, lived with Him. The fields were full of Him. He walked through the earth before their very eyes. If He blesses them they are grateful, and there on the spot they build an altar. If He frowns, "they get them unto their Lord right humbly." They had a God, and so they became men; for that is the only thing that can make men of us. And so there the patriarchs stand, those rude Syrian shepherds, dwelling in tents, the most dignified men, even as far down as to-day, in all the story of the world.

I look back into the rude scenes of a very distant age. I see a man surrounded by a few camels and sheep, whose greatest boon was a well of spring water, or a pasture. This man knew very few moral rules, and did not always obey what he knew; he had no Ten Commandments, no prophets, no Gospel,—yet I see that man turning with unspeakable awe to the One invisible, longing, even unrighteously, for the spiritual birthright. When he is distressed, I see him struggling as a wrestler with God the night through. In gloom and desolation I see him

dreaming of heaven and the angels of God. As years go on I see him growing and rising in spiritual life, and at the end I see him, even him, the most secular of the patriarchs, "worshipping, leaning upon the top of his staff," uplifted into such faith in God, and into such visions as faith only can see, so that his lips break into the first prophetic song which is found in the Bible,—the first model of all that wonderful Hebrew prophecy, (you may see it through the 49th chapter of Genesis,) beginning, "Gather yourselves together, ye sons of Jacob, and hearken unto Israel your father,"—every sentence filled with the finest insight, with a wonderful condensation of thought, and beauty and boldness of imagery, and all together standing as a series of great sculptures, in which the coming history of the Hebrew tribes is cut as in everlasting rock.

I see all this and much more amid the rudest times and rudest men. I turn from this. I see the man of to-day. Perhaps it is you, perhaps I. I see men more widely moralized, more civilized certainly, on all sides enriched, the whole world pushed far forward; I see men who have seen the face of Christ, received the deliverance from sin, with an overshadowing Spirit guiding them into all truth and showing them openly of the Father; I see the great veil lifted from the unknown world: yet—yet where are the aspirings for the birthright? where are the wrestlings which master even God? where are the visions of His love and care? Where? where? I

see rather a world crying: "Give me of the red-red pottage. I am on the point to die!" True, true, we talk well; we can despise Jacob. But he had a God. Have we? Can we say from the heart, "O God, thou art my God"? If not, then, though I have what is called an advanced civilization, I am a little man still under it all; I am only varnished over; civilization is upon me and around me, but not *in* me; "I am without God in the world."

## JACOB'S VISION, CONSECRATION, AND VOW.

GENESIS XXVIII.

I HAVE spoken of Jacob in his relation to Esau, but not fully vindicated him. I wish now to speak of two chief facts in his career,—the vision and the wrestling.

You remember that in the beginning of Jacob's story, after he had supplanted his brother Esau, from fear of Esau he fled and went forth an exile. He went forth sad and desolate, I have no doubt, as the young usually do, but lifted up with a sort of mysterious lift because now his father's mysterious blessing was his, and now the great promises of the future were set as a crown of gold upon his head. Under these mingled feelings "he went toward Haran," and the night drew on. It was his first night of absence and solitude,—the first hour when, separated from all, he realized his relationship to God. "And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed." Under the solemn and splendid sky of an Eastern night, under great hopes and mysterious feelings, he slept and dreamed.

Dreams and visions specially marked were commonly thought divine ; but, as men have found so much of false in this theory, they have given up the grain of valuable truth. For (even apart from any thing supernatural) there are dreams which bring out with such power and such awe the inmost heart of the heart,—so picture and cast outward what is deepest within us,—that they may well be thought special divine hints ; and sometimes they may singularly rehearse the future ; for in the heart, if its inmost feelings are reached, is the greatest of nature's conflicts. And certainly I think this dream of Jacob's was an outward picture of the deepest feelings and wants of his heart. " And he dreamed, and beheld a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven ; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."

Now the character of Jacob was a very mixed and worldly one, I must allow ; but no man whose heart is at bottom bad, or purely worldly, would be likely to dream such a dream as that. It was a dream of God,—a dream that Jacob's common earth, on the open plain, with stones for his pillow, was not profane ground, or isolated from even the highest regions, but bridged and joined, from the place where his head lay, up to God,—a dream that heaven and earth were social,—a dream that he, Jacob, though in solitude, was surrounded by the best society,—that he was not absent, not distant,—that what the eye sees of distance, or what the heart feels of isola-

tion, is not true,—that there is a hidden nearness,—that we have already come “to the general assembly and church of the first-born,” which the pure, desiring heart reaches even now,—that streams of angels run between place and place,—that millions of ministering creatures are “sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.”

If this be not literally true, it is at least the only adequate expression of a literal truth. Let us not be misled by words. What Jacob felt in his dream was, that this world is no such obstruction between spirits, no such hindrance to the wishes of our hearts, as we creatures of sense foolishly feel. He dreamed that that was true which Christ taught plainly was truth : that sense is a delusion,—that the Son of man standing on earth was yet in heaven,—that streams of power, intelligence, sympathy, streams of radiant pity, of ministering love and wisdom, run down upon us, and, lifting our hearts with them, run up again to God. O that we who are so befooled by sense, and now especially by what we call law, who feel that God is shut out, etc., would remember Jacob's dream !

In the most beautiful form poet ever imagined, Jacob saw that he the exile was always at home, the solitary Jacob was always with his friends, the weak and erring Jacob was not deserted ; that the child man, through all distance, through all obstructions, is heart to heart with God. What a deep truth is here ! Is it not just the

same as that uttered by Paul: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"?

But this was not all. This vision was a vision of the future. These patriarchs knew that in them were the seeds of the future. They knew very dimly what that future was; but in them they knew "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." So I doubt not that Jacob's vision of this splendid intercourse was felt, not merely as personal, but as a picture and foreshadow of a general fact. It was a hint and hope of a time when there should be a bridal of the earth and heaven, when their long divorce through sin and sense should end, and men walk with God on a regenerated earth. Such a future has been dreamed of ever since. Will it ever come? Essentially,—not in form, but in substance,—I believe it will; for, if a God be, this must be. Not in the childish ways millennium-mongers dream of; but the one great fact, that the heart's wishes shall be realized, is fulfilled when Christ's faith belongs to us; this faith, which is the actual "substance of things hoped for," is the drawing power that unites us to God.

So much Jacob may have dimly understood. Perhaps no more. Many centuries afterward there appeared One who gave a new interpretation to this dream, who said

to the world this : " Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man " ; that is, Jacob's vision shall be seen by every eye, only in a new and unspeakable way. That ladder, or grand stairway, to Jacob was not at all the main fact in the scene ; it was the hidden or half-seen thread on which the pearls were strung. The main fact was " the angels of God ascending and descending on it." But " hereafter " they shall be seen " ascending and descending upon the Son of man." That makes a new and quite different vision ! When the heavens are pushed away, God will be seen, and ascending and descending angels ; but the main fact will be *the spiritual ladder*, a Mediator made evident, a uniting Being, divine and human, laying his hand on earth and heaven, through whom all gracious things shall descend from God,—through whom all gracious things shall ascend back to God.

This was Jacob's vision ; and now for Jacob's consecration of the place of his vision. So " Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said : Surely the Lord is in this place ; and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said : How dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The place seemed indescribably awful to him,—even Bethel !

Do you think the spirit which felt that uncommon awe was a common spirit, not touched to any finer issues ? Why, every word of the description seems to speak a



soul as susceptible to reverence and religion as even those angels the prophet saw, who veiled their faces and said: "Holy, holy, holy!" But, not content with a mere emotion, he is driven by the power of the feeling to action. And he "rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el."

Not perhaps in visions, but in ways no less authentic, awful things are opened to every one of us,—rents in the veil! Is Jacob's awe with us, and the consecration? I know that human nature is not without its depths. It consecrates. The world is full of consecrated places. When any spot of earth is associated with genius or the thoughts of genius,—with deliverances and high deeds in war or peace,—where the human heart has thrilled through its depths, there is consecrated ground; there is a temple. And so let it be. To make sacred even the clod on which he treads, by the feelings of his heart—by any better feeling—distinguishes and glorifies our humanity, whether it be the spot where a nation's life is lost or won, or the spot where bloomed the first pure affections of the heart. But with this primitive Hebrew, whom so many sneer at, the awe was a different awe. It was not genius, or war, or love, which consecrated the earth to him; but it was God who made the ground hallowed. Are we up to that? Why, even our ecclesiastical history,—even the Church in its

most reverential ages,—even the deep awe which made every part of Palestine holy land, which moved Christian Europe, in vast crusades from west to east,

“ To chase the pagans in those holy fields,  
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet  
Which eighteen hundred years ago were nailed  
For our advantage on the bitter cross,”—

this consecration,—and all the church consecrations of the reverential ages, in their wars, their cathedrals, in all their monuments,—are they like the simple consecration of Jacob when he set up a stone for a pillar? Were their visions of an earth crowded with pure angels,—an earth which was the gate of heaven? Was their God as pure and loving as the God of Jacob? or was it not rather some phantom of superstition, blighting and not blessing the places where he appears? Nay, so far as I can judge, few souls since Jacob have had a heart and an eye like his, to whom God has been at once so holy and so real, —to whom the common ground has been hallowed by such pure awe. I know that these old servants, and Jacob too, were limited. To them it was this spot or that where God specially was. I know that a wider reverence hallows to the Christian man all of earth and all of humanity,—sees God everywhere, through all his workings, and not merely in dream and prodigy,—wakes up any moment, at any place, and says, “Surely the Lord is in this place.” Ours is altogether a consecrated earth. That Presence penetrates through the wide ocean and the

living air. I know that the morning light, the descent of the sun, the solitary night, with its moon, and stars, and clouds,—nay, “the meanest flower that blows,”—all are ladders bearing His angels. Nay, I know that this consecrated earth is nothing to our consecrated history. We may see the ladder of God and his angels in the consolations of every solitary hour ; we may see God, dreadful and threatening, in the lonely conscience when the wrong is done. Still, wider and juster as this is, we are not equal to it ; and so I think that this despised Jacob claims yet his superiority. Again, are we equal even to the vow which followed it ?

Listen : “ And Jacob vowed a vow, saying : If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God ; and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house.”

This vow has been sneered at,—a bargain of Jacob’s, it is said. And in truth it is not in the highest spirit. But at least there is no affectation of superfine piety in the Bible. That is something. What it is, *it is*. But what is this ? Perhaps not a shrewd bargain, but a solemn and creditable contract with God,—namely, that Jacob will be faithful to God if God will be faithful to him. Not the highest, certainly,—not Job’s “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Jacob would have stood, of course, on a far nobler height had he said : “ I will wor-

ship this adorable God, who has shown me his glory and has stooped to my low estate. I will trust and obey him though he desert me and strip me."

Yes; but when shall we have done thinking that our refinements and perfections of view were theirs? An occasional spirit like Abraham's went higher than Jacob's. A spirit like Job's shot far higher yet, I think, and anticipated the whole possibility of man. These were splendid anomalies; but Jacob was the true representative of the good man of his time. Remembering this, the contract was not as bad as it seems, but was natural and even beautiful. He does not ask God for riches, but simply, like a child (for these primitive men were but children), he asks only for protection and support: "If the Lord will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, then shall the Lord be my God." This, though it has a child's religious inferiority, yet seems so artless and heartfelt that I think it was, even to the ear of God, a very pleasing speech. And I wish that we would go as far. Suppose now we say,—which of us is ready?—"If the Lord will keep me alive for this year, and give me food and raiment, he shall be my God." Let no man sneer at Jacob until he is Jacob's equal.

This is the first of the scenes. The second is this: On Jacob's return from the land of the people of the East, after many years of successful industry, with his family and herds, as he approaches,—behold Esau! He was

"greatly afraid and distressed." So he sent a present to Esau, and sent also before him his family and all that he had. So "Jacob was left alone," to solitude and night; and the strange story goes on:—"And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And the man said: Let me go, for the day breaketh. And Jacob said: I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And the man said: Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him: Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said: Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there."

Very obscure. But whatever we may make of this story, so much at least is clear to me. His heart oppressed, overwhelmed, for all was at stake, and he had nothing to rest on, he found himself wrestling with an unknown man. It was a night of exigency,—of such exigency as only happens once or twice in a lifetime,—when the spirit must find out the great shelter, God, know him, rest upon him, get assurance from him, or it is lost. But God—especially to the half-secular soul of Jacob and such as he was—is slow to be found out, and hard to be rested upon. In these great emergencies he stands before the spirit as a reality, to be sure, but an unknown reality, an unsatisfactory reality, yielding no blessing, and as if struggling to get away. That is just the way God seems to some souls in the moments of their imminent want. But Jacob, with the earnestness

of deadly need, and with the singular energy and persistency which marked his nature, struggled on, as if wrestling,—wrestling with a living man (how vivid!)—wrestling through all the hours of the night, “until the breaking of the day”; and then at last (though the agony of that night left its mark on him) he wrung out a blessing,—that is, in the breaking of the day he came to light and to assurance of soul. “And he blessed him there.”

Jacob got what he struggled for,—light and assurance; but not all he struggled for. Mark: “And Jacob said: Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said: Wherefore dost thou ask after my name? And he blessed him there.” God refused his name. Why? By “name” Jacob meant a description, a picture of God,—full information as to God; for a name in those sincere times was a literal image of a thing. Jacob in his agony wrestled for the deepest acquaintance with God; for he felt what was expressed in those fine words: “Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace.” He struggled for the deepest acquaintance and assurance of this great unknown object, because this was now his all, his only resort. But God refused: “Wherefore?” He says as much as: “I will bless thee; I will give thee the feeling of acquaintance with God and its peace; I will bless thee; but ask me not for ideal definitions and descriptions.”

Now this little thing, as it may seem, occurring so far back as the patriarchs, in the simplest times when, though

they had reached the idea of the one God, it was a God very much as a man, is to me most wonderful,—fills me with awe for the revelation of God in this Book. Here in the midst of a story of early shepherds, their follies, their crimes, their sheep and camels, runs a celestial thread of gold; here are signs of a singular spirit in them; and every now and then we see the breaking of singular lights over their heads. This wrestling of Jacob is a specimen of what I mean by a singular spirit in them.

This answer of the Being,—“Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?”—what does it mean? So far as I can judge, it is the same reply that was given long afterward to the wise and learned Moses,—“When I speak to the people who shall I say hath sent me? What is thy name?” “I AM THAT I AM. This shalt thou say, I AM hath sent me unto you,”—that is, as I think, “I am, the nameless One, the One who refuses to be named, whose being transcends all description.”

The highest revelation of God must consist of two sides,—the apprehensible, the inapprehensible. God must be the apprehensible and inapprehensible God. Throughout the Bible he is introduced generally with the definition and distinction of a high man; he talks, acts, feels before us as plainly as any character in the history, and we have the satisfaction of the clearest knowledge. But were this all, it would not have been

God,—and would have ended in the rankest idolatry. So in this singular tale of Jacob,—so far back,—for the first time, I think, is there a revelation of the infinite, unspeakable God, manifested so simply in the fact that he refuses to be or cannot be revealed. “Wherefore?” “I am.”

From this scene we learn something of Jacob's wants and his energy. From this moment was revealed in him distinctly that higher nature, that powerful grip upon spiritual things, which St. Paul calls “laying hold on eternal life,” that singular life and power in the beliefs of the soul which must prevail; for from this moment he who was called “the supplanter” was named “Israel,” the prince of God; “for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men.” From this moment dates, though with many declensions, the true patriarch.

Here then are these two scenes. I have selected them as illustrating, first, the inconsistencies of the man, which are tests of the existence and struggling of a higher soul; and, secondly, his gradual superiority. Both vindicate his right to a place as patriarch. If any man will be made sure of the reality of this history of Jacob, let him observe how, upon the surface, it deals with matters of worldly prosperity, and how obscure, how undesigned are the proofs or hints that he was indeed a patriarch in the true line of the Divine Spirit. Nay, I see in this narrative what is always observable in genuine men,—the worst part is more exposed; the good, latent,—not solicitously brought out.



Jacob is to me the most difficult character in the Bible history. He looks so worldly, shrewd, and even unscrupulous, that it is hard to reconcile ourselves to him. I feel the justice of the sneers about him, and sometimes it seems humbling that this should be one of the patriarchs, even in that rude time. But if all were on one side it would be easy, however painful, to judge of him. It is his singular contradictions, with his visions of angels, etc., that make it hard. He cheats his brother; and behold him just afterward with his consecration, his awful sense of God's presence, and hear his simple vow! Behold Jacob so shrewd to Laban, so calculating and successful! Behold him returning; see the shrinking of his guilty and timid heart; and then at night see this scene of wrestling!

We are all of us mixtures of earth and heaven, but I know of none like this. That Balaam who loved righteousness and saw the visions of the Lord, and yet loved the wages of unrighteousness and wished to circumvent the Almighty, is not to me so strange an inconsistency. On the one hand I see Jacob sometimes so merely a Jew that he seems the father of Jewish guile, fear, unscrupulousness, and thrift. On the other I see him sometimes, not only as the deeply faithful lover in his youth, the most tender father, but as an elevated, majestic man of faith, who believed in high things, who valued them, and who left on record such words of lowliness and penitence for his faults, in such genuine tones, that the purest and

most repentant hearts take them up from age to age and repeat them as their own: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant"; "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," etc. Nay, I see him sometimes as so purely an inspired Hebrew, that he seems the father of the visions of Hebrew prophets, the father of the Psalms, and the father of the deepest spiritual insights of the Bible. How wonderful!

The shame and sorrow and shock of such contradictions is a common tale. Alas that we, who are linked in some qualities, at some moments, with the highest, purest, in the fellowship of Christ, should so blaspheme ourselves, should descend from angels' food to prey on garbage,—that heavenly-fashioned hearts should go into business and society, and do mean things, and be worldly Jacobs, and forget, and live our low lives, while we have in solemn moments our visions and wrestlings! This is not merely for reproach, but for hope. As these contradictions show us the deeper spirit in us, we should accept them in ourselves and in others with hope. All the world before Christ, and most of the world since, looking upon the lower and more obvious side of man, had no hope of him. Christ believed in the higher side of man. Awful contradiction as man is, Christ believed in the power of the better part. Oh what a hope and belief that was!

This should be our feeling, at least as to others. But

as to ourselves, this joy of hope should have one condition,—that we see the good, however slowly, gain on the evil. It may be slow. If you look at Jacob's life, you will not mark when or how the better heart prevailed; but if you look through the whole, if you read the last scenes of the most venerable and penitent and at last purified and majestic patriarch, you will see that the work was doing all the time, and at last was done.

In spite of contradictions and discreditable shocks, hope in yourselves if only the holier and more honest life grows,—if only, looking back, you can say: "Slowly, yes, slowly, with long, unworthy declensions,—but still, 'hitherto hath the Lord helped me,' and out of my errors and sorrows and wrongs has taught me and chastened me and set me forward." Then rejoice, and hope still more largely of yourself; for, though you have been as poor and secular as Jacob at one time,—a mere supplanter,—at another, through the mercy of Him who hath redeemed you, your name shall be "Israel, a prince of God," and you will shine at last, even as the star of Jacob, bright in the firmament forever!

## JOSEPH.

GENESIS XXXVII.

WE have in this chapter an interesting picture of human life,—of the human heart. It is the beginning of the tale of Joseph, which is the best known and perhaps the most interesting of all the early tales of the world.

This beginning groups together the past, the present, and the future: the past in the figure of Jacob the father,—a glimpse backward into the wonderful years of his life; the present, in the picture of his grown sons; the future, in the boy Joseph, and in the glimpse of anticipation into his high life and history.

The patriarch appears here as the figure of a man who after a life of trouble seems about to begin an old age of comfort, surrounded by children. But now, in fact, was about to begin (and such is often the case in human life) that second era of troubles, the troubles which were to come to him through his own offspring.

The record of the patriarchs just as fathers is curious to read. Abraham, a strong character, seemed to overshadow and repress his son Isaac; the good, but somewhat weak Isaac was a tool in the hands of his wife

Rebekah, and of his crafty son Jacob; and Jacob, in his turn, suffered from his own large household of bad or indifferent sons. Of the three patriarchs, Abraham seems the only good father, and yet his was too powerful a nature to allow the proper growth of his son; he was like a tree of heavy and thick shade, under which Isaac could not flourish. So we see the difficulties of being a good parent, since the extremes of repression on one side, and of indulgence on the other, equally injure.

As an instance of the effect of parental weakness, as opposed to the parental force of Abraham, see here the fact, that the second era of the troubles of Jacob was to spring out of his love, his weak, ill-regulated love, as rich a source of woes as hate is. Such an indifferent brood of sons as he had could hardly have been matured under a wise discipline. Nay, we have a small instance of the weakness of Jacob's love before us,—small, but of dire effect. “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children,” and, knowing what Joseph was, we cannot consider it blamable that his father should love him most. But parental partiality, though often a virtue rather than a vice, cannot be too carefully guarded, or bitter fruits will be reaped in the hearts of children. Jacob's pride in Joseph made him imprudent in the showing of it, and imprudence you know is punished in this world often more heavily than crime. It was certainly so in Jacob's case. The old man, in the fondness of his heart, made

Joseph "a coat of many colors," and decked the beautiful lad in this gay and splendid garment. This lavish pride and preference he seems to have shown in many ways. "And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him." This feeling was much increased by Joseph himself; for he "dreamed a dream," and told it unto his brethren. It was the dream of the sheaves. And again he told them how, in another dream of his, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to him.

Now there are a great many things well enough for us to know, but not to tell, especially things which look conceited. Prudence is a great virtue. I don't know, however, what it was that led Joseph to tell his dreams. Just as in life a man's acts and character may well mean either one of two things, so here. Perhaps it was a youthful conceit in Joseph, and antagonism toward his brethren, and if so he was punished. But I suppose it was not this. I see nothing of this kind in his noble character. The telling of his flattering dreams seems rather like a mark of special innocency, and the absence of the very conceit it looked most like. He either told them in a thoughtless way, or, if he considered the dreams a prophecy of his great future, he felt about it all as if it were a divine fact which was far from rousing pride in him, and so he just went and told his brethren all about it.

Have you never seen such unconscious and innocent natures? The greatest egotism, in appearance, is often shown where there is the most beautiful freedom from it, and where there is only a simple-hearted and quite unselfish interest in the proud fact. Many, perhaps all, the Old Testament heroes, viewed in a vulgar way, are great egotists. Paul also showed great egotism in the same style,—speaking high things of himself just as a matter of fact. But in this case of Joseph, it certainly did seem to be such an excess as shocked even old Jacob, and it completed the jealous hate of the brothers.

On a certain day when there was a chance, these brothers, being filled with rancor, designed Joseph's murder. The thing was terrible. It seems beyond human nature, and I may say terribly savage, but do not exaggerate it. In those times the thought of hate was very near to the act of murder. Shylock's expression, "Hates any man the thing he would not kill?" is but a transcript of the feelings of that race. Besides, all passions were, if I may so express it, nearer to act then than now. Civilization is an increase of prudence,—that is its main meaning,—and through prudence we seem much better than we are, as Joseph's brethren seem much worse than they were. It is this coming out of the heart in the Bible just as in the case of children, which shows us on its page such real pictures of human nature, and tells us the secret meaning of bosom enormities. If I want to know the turpitude of feelings which now vent

themselves in a glance, I go back to the ages of murder, for there the image of the emotion is painted fully in the act.

Bad, therefore, as these brothers were, we must not think too hardly of them. Their defence would be, I suppose, something like this: Joseph seemed to them a tale-bearer, for, according to the narrative, "Joseph brought unto his father their evil report." Again, he seemed to them a usurper, appropriating their proper place and rank, for surely if his dreams showed what was in his heart he was going on to put them all under his feet,—“the elder was to bow down to the younger.” So you see the worst cause has some excuse. But after all, though they seemed to have some excuse, and though they were not altogether hardened,—for when they came to wreak their vengeance, they did relent enough not at once to kill him but finally determined to sell him,—still, and at the best, the case was atrocious. The keen cruelty of envy was at the bottom of it. His beauty at their side had made them ugly, and they hated him with a deadly hate.

Now is this any thing old, far away, antiquated? Why, this day, whenever we are not content with what is awarded us,—and who is?—whenever we have not pleasure in seeing the wealth, the beauty, the talent of others, and in hearing the praises of just success,—whenever the gifts and beauties of the younger brother displease us, and we are called, like the sun, moon, and stars in the



dream, to bow down to some new sun risen in the firmament, and our souls turn into poison and bitterness, there we are, with the spirit of envy in us; yes, and in this deadly discontent and hate is the seed of murder.

I know that a sense of justice often deceives us. We may feel, and justly too, that the favorite is over-praised; we may think, and justly too, that there is a cruel favoritism in the judgments of the world, that blind fashion is at work (fashion, which knows no equity, which sheds a blackness behind it on all from which it turns away, and casts a glory before it, on all toward which it turns its face); but after all is said, our coolest justice is apt to be tinged by the yellow blood of envy; and though we do not kill anybody, *we do not love*; if we could get rid of the man or woman, we should be very glad to sell them into Egypt. Such murdering envy and hate as these brothers had, of course we have not,—yet, mark this, neither have we their full and ingenuous sense of our iniquity, nor do we make their confession of wrong. If we compare ourselves with them at all, the comparison should be complete. We have all done wrong to others; yet count (we easily can) in how many cases have we confessed the wrong? Scarcely a score of times. We may go so far as to say we have been mistaken, etc. Yet hear these brutal brothers, years after their crime too,—“Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil; and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the ser-

vants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him."

We have now glanced at the father, Jacob, and at his sons. Let us look a little at that boy who, nurtured amid love and hate, went forward to so great a future.

His character had that about it which, through his whole life, turned evil into good; and of all the traits of man this is the most valuable. Joseph, brutally sold, sold into Egypt, seemed by that act only transferred into a fit arena for his talents and virtues. Then in Egypt he met a long course of baseness, but suffered it, and bore himself with a gentle magnanimity, not avenging himself. When he reached prosperity, he was not befooled by it, but through long-succeeding calamities commended himself to all who came in contact with him. At last his great opportunity arrived. He foresaw the coming famine, and by one master-act of prudence he at once saved the people of Egypt and gave new power and lustre to the throne. Henceforward his place was at the king's side. Then came his brethren to buy corn, and afterward follow those artless scenes of simplicity and forgiveness which show that this great prince was still in heart like a shepherd boy in Dothan,—scenes which stand in literature among the most precious treasures of antiquity. This whole life exhibited throughout, as I have said, one magnificent glory, the glory of transmutation. His fortune was all like a black cloud, but a cloud bathed in the sunset, and illumined, and shot

through with the light of his soul. His own evil, nay the evils of Egypt, he turns to good: and even the spirit of the devil, which was in the hearts of his brothers, he turns, through his princely magnanimity, through his beautiful mercy, into penitence and tears. The history is ideally perfect. Never was there a finer example of the triumph of character over men and events.

There are three sorts of hearts,—the heart naturally sour, the heart easily made sour, and the heart which is sweet through all and over all. We constantly find men not naturally sour, yet easily made so; and the persistent, triumphant good heart is rare indeed. That had Joseph, not naturally ugly, and not easily made so. Yet nothing seemed more inevitable in his case, for such harsh treatment usually makes harsh men. But he was not turned into evil; he met evil and turned it into good, and the great lesson of his life is, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

This is the *general* truth about him. Among the *special* virtues which he showed, the Bible virtue of faith is prominent. He believed in his people and in their future. When dying in Egypt "he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel: and gave commandment concerning his bones,"—that is, he believed that a great rescue or redemption awaited them; and he who foresaw the great famine of Egypt, foresaw the day of hope for his own people. "I die," he said, "and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land."

He had faith also, I think, in his own destiny. It runs under and all through his life. He believed not only in his people ; he believed also in himself. Those dreams of his at the start of his life imply, I think, and perhaps spring from, this unconscious belief in himself as the chosen of God, and they are the key to all that comes after. What Abraham felt as to his destiny was felt by Joseph. Confound it not with egotism or self-vanity, for he was kept tender and humble and domestic and patriotic, because he had the faith to know and live with his father's God. Then see how this conscious relation to God controlled his whole heart. Having become almost an Egyptian, yet he kept himself as a sacred thing, and behaved himself as a child of the Highest, through the longest troubles, and through the most seducing temptations.

He also showed the Bible virtue of humility. When at last he became highly exalted, see how he tempered himself. He who, even when a boy, dreamed that "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to him," now that he is the first prince in the highest civilization of the earth, bows himself to his old Hebrew father, and is as tender as a mother to his brother Benjamin. When he was, I say, a great prince of Egypt, when the divining cup of silver stood upon his table, when he was married to the daughter of Poti-pherah, the priest of On (a very high connection), he yet receives the poor Hebrew shepherds with the unspoiled feelings of youth.

See also in him the Bible virtue of forgiveness. To most people this is his eminent grace,—his forgiveness of his brethren ; and certainly it has never been surpassed. Meekness and forgiveness are quite different things in different people. Some are of such a natural insensibility to wrong and insult that their forbearance is not of great value. But Joseph had a most sensitive, and, if we may judge from his dreams, a very high heart. Yet for this sensitive soul, which more than once turns aside to weep, this high man, beautiful in person, his heart rich with gifts, standing at the head of Egypt,—for him to turn with such dignified humility and pardon to his hard and cruel brothers,—what an act !

It is not without right that the instinct of the Church has seen in Joseph the great anticipation of Christ. So far as I can judge, he seems to have been the most faultless of all the Hebrews, and the nearest to Christ. He carried the best Hebrew virtues into foreign life, and exalted them, and added to them a charm something like Christ's. While there runs through the best models of the Hebrew character a unity in some points,—such as a singular faith,—yet we see that the meek and tender virtues—the general humanity which is brought into such eminence in Christianity—have no great exemplar except Joseph in the Old Testament history. He differs from antiquity. He is the first Christian,—like an angel of God, not only toward his own brethren, but toward the whole of Egypt.

Before Christ so long there existed such a man as

Joseph the Hebrew, "whose feet they hurt in the stocks; the word of the Lord tried him." The generations come and go, and all that is left of them here is the record of the way in which they stood trial. They are passed on with that verdict written on each of them,—how he stood his trial. Infinitely various are the histories of men, but one thing is repeated in all,—“He was here to meet evil. How did he meet it?” A dream of dignity is dreamed by every human soul about itself; it begins the youth of every man. Have you faith in your dream? and is your life a work to make that dream real,—to live up to God's high design? Forced into some lot that may not suit you, wronged, sold into Egypt, do you address yourself to the duties of the place? Do you swallow down great wrongs, eager only to do right,—rising above your own heart, above seductions on this side and fear on that, trusting tenderly in God the Saviour?

Joseph did this; his immortal epitaph is, that he did this. Oh! shall that epitaph be ours when our day is over? “Crucified with Christ, but risen with Christ,”—do you know what that means?

“I cannot hide that some have striven,  
Achieving calm, to whom was given  
The joy that mixes man with heaven:

“Who, rowing hard against the stream,  
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,  
And did not dream it was a dream.

“Which did accomplish their desire,  
Bore and forbore, and did not tire;  
Like Joseph, an unquenched fire.”

## CALEB.

My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land.—NUMBERS xiv., 24.

MOSES, when he drew nigh with the people to the land promised and expected, sent out, it seems, a selected company of the best persons, one man from every tribe, each a warrior and a ruler; and he said to them: "Get you up southward, and go up into the mountain; and see the land, what it is, and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean; and what cities they be that the people dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds."

So they went, and after forty days they returned, bringing back, as the best description of the fatness of the land, one bunch of grapes, which they gathered by a brook,—the grapes of Eshcol,—of such size and weight that they bare it between two men on a staff; and "they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs"; and they spake and said: "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there."

Here is the report,—a beautiful land,—but then the strong people!—the walled cities!—the giants! And this was the report of the high commission,—not a tale caught up by fools or cowards, but the account of the few choicest leaders.

The people heard this report,—they saw there before them Paradise renewed, but a dragon in it. Those very pictures of hope which the Angel of the Covenant had set up before them as they left the house of their bondage were become now a matter of fact, alive and glowing before them. But here is an unexpected thing; here are five great barbarous tribes, some of them invincible in the mountains, some of them keeping the plains, some of them flanked by the sea; and here, above all that is real,—here are giants!—phantoms standing like towers, and guarding the land! So the whole of the multitude gave way to a panic, so great that even Moses, that wonderful leader of the people, seems to have lost power for the moment.

Then it was that Caleb stood forth and “stilled the people” and said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” But fear and discontent prevailed. They had come so far, and through such ways, to find this at the end! “And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night, and said, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!” And then they were for making a



captain of their own and returning (slaves that they were) to be slaves again among the flesh-pots of Egypt, and in the degrading security of a slave's life.

But Caleb and Joshua, noble brothers in faith, rent their clothes before the people and said: "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us. Fear not the people of the land, for they are bread for us." What noble words for these servants of the Lord to utter!—what majestic wills had they! Not only were they erect amid that rush of common fear which swept rulers and people from their feet,—not only unsubdued, but gathering force and making nothing of all power, though it be of men or giants,—“for they are bread for us.” But such nobleness only made them despicable. They were a poor minority. What right had they? So this protest was met as high feeling is usually met,—“All the congregation bade stone them with stones.”

Then, it is recorded, the glory of the Lord (as in a lightning of indignation) suddenly blazed in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the people, and a voice was heard: “Surely this people shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers,”—a fatal proclamation made to a whole people as they stood on the verge of their highest hopes. The voice added, however: “But my servant Caleb, because he hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land.”

In the consideration of this story, I shall confine myself to a few things of permanent value. I leave out all that the conduct and doom of this unhappy people might teach. I leave out the mean cowardice of this high commission, who liked the land but did not dare go up; and I leave out the warning to all truly high classes, who side with a mean popular voice, and pander to it. I shall not speak of the weakness or the fraud of those in every age—especially now and among us—who, being placed over, or placed higher than others, should be sternly held responsible to be stronger and purer than others. I leave all this out, and contemplate Caleb alone.

From what I see of him here, I take Caleb to have been, first of all, a thoughtful person, a considering man, capable of being taught, which cannot be said of many. He had seen no more of God than had all the others, but what he saw, he saw, and after he had come through the Red Sea, and looked at the hand of the invisible One in the wilderness, he felt that that was enough for a wise man; and so he did not go about afterward, as the others did, to frame doubts or to call every new case different, and say: "True, he saved us there, but can he save us here? He gave us water, but can he give us bread also?"

He had no brutal capacity for forgetting, either. When the illustrious moments of God were past, their shining kept with him. He was not so swallowed up in to-day as to forget yesterday, and to say, "Where?" He for-

got not how God "had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan." He remembered; and that, observing human nature, then and now, is much. He remembered. If nothing else could be said of him, this would be enough. Ah! if it could be said of us! On the paths behind us, all along them, are scattered the tokens of a God as wonderful as the God of the Red Sea or the God of the desert; but, like these Hebrews, we must hear the sharp crack of His thunder again to-day, or we will not so much as know that there is a God.

So bestial is this oblivion of our past, so fatal are its consequences, that had I the power at this moment to call forth a new and mighty prophet for the instruction of mankind, I would require that he be a prophet of the past, rather than a prophet of the future. I mean that I would rather that he should show me clearly all that has happened to me, that he should set my past in a light clear and sacred and lasting, than that he should illuminate for me all the unknown yet to come. If I were to ask any one gift for us, it would be an illuminated memory of our own private history, and of that God who has everywhere shown himself in it, filling it with the wonders of his justice and mercy,—with warning and hope.

See next the independence of Caleb. The act altogether nearest the godlike is that of a man who, in the face of opinion and of public shame, and against a fiery current of everybody's feelings, even of those who are

near to being a part of himself, stands fixed in his judgment of what is right, uncorrupted, and unshaken,—a liegeman of Duty! So stood Caleb; and his attitude is to me the noblest I can imagine.

I know it is false and blasphemous, the maxim that “the voice of the people is the voice of God,” yet the mere power of universal opinion, universal feeling, is such that no one can exaggerate it, and few withstand it. Let all voices be heard in one intense cry, and you will see not only the feelings but the consciences of men swept away as by the outlet of an ocean. Nay, the outcry of the people is felt, for the time, to carry God with it, and to be his veritable voice. He who resists it must be something above or below man. And no fine soul can resist it, unless he is under a higher sympathy,—a sympathy with a better public opinion and with the nobler society of God and the just. A sympathy with God and with duty, with the welfare of the people,—that, and that only, lifted Caleb up clean out of sympathy with the whole degraded nation.

See again, not only his independence toward his own people, but his courage. Never was there greater occasion for apprehension. If the Israelite looked to his own camp, he saw it hampered with wives and children,—an unwarlike mass moving out of the wilderness,—not even moving onward under savage enthusiasms (which enthusiasms again and again in history have made the descent of wild hordes like the sweep of a wing of

fire),—I say, not moving thus, but creeping on at best under a cold thought of duty, or under a cold fear of Moses and the unseen Lord. What could be done with such men, whose choice princes and leaders came trembling back at the sight of the enemy? What could be done with this feeble mob, when before them stood swarms of formidable warlike tribes? At this awful moment Caleb stood forth. "The cities *are* great and walled, the people be strong,—yes; and there are giants there; but let us go up at once and possess it, for we are able to overcome."

If you speak of courage, look at this. The records of man have nothing greater. "We are nothing"; all the people, all the leaders, say; "We be not able," etc. "We are of a gigantic brood, higher and mightier than they all," say Caleb and Joshua. All courage, if it is not merely animal, rests on something higher,—rests often on duty and devotion to others.

I think an example of this is seen in Arthur, Duke of Wellington. He was unawed, at the great crisis of Waterloo especially, because of duty. When all Europe, and military men particularly, were under a fascination as of magic from the genius and success of Napoleon, who towered over them like a phantom, the Duke had little or no imaginative fear on the subject. He looked coolly and soberly at the object as it was, and calmly confided in his forces and plans, resting on duty and right. And so this was the man whom God appointed

to win; hence Waterloo. He first kept his soul unsubjugated, and the unprecedented and irresistible genius against him did not master or overawe his imagination.

But the courage of Caleb was far higher than this; it was against far greater odds, and it was founded not merely on devotion to duty, but on perfect assurance in God. We call this courage, and it was; but it rested on something deeper and far more rare,—on *trust*.

The heroic virtues of those old Hebrews were not the heroic virtues of Plutarch; they were all that, but much more. Though the obstacles were bristling before him as high as heaven, the Lord on high was mightier. To go forward was to move in the invincible line of right. In that line he saw that God moved with them, and that those who were for them were mightier than those who were against them. And so Caleb touched and rested on powers the eye could not see. He had within him the great Hebrew secret of faith; and when he said, "Let us go up, for we are able," he knew he took God with him.

This is the common principle of the Old and the New Testament, and makes the opposite virtues of a rude and warlike society essentially the same as the peaceful virtues of Christianity to-day. The quiet trust in God of a weak woman in her hard daily life, surrounded by fears, is essentially the same as that which gave courage to Caleb. We see Jesus, born of the same tribe as Caleb,—we see him no warrior, one who said, "Put up thy

sword," etc., yet Caleb's independence of men, his courage before force, was but a weak and limited shadow of the heroism of Christ, even in his meekest and gentlest action.

See then in Caleb just the virtues demanded of us to-day. To us—to each man of us—who have always a crowd of discouragements holding us back, creeping on with but half a heart, to us this exhilarating voice comes like a trumpet sounding from that distant time: "Let us go up, for we are able."

We need the joy, the hope, of courage; and that we may have courage, we need an unbounded trust in God.

In this story of the old time,—this historical picture, seen far back and illumined with miraculous lights,—there is nothing old or strange to me: ourselves are there, in bare fact, as we are every day. We see that the land is good,—but ah, the giants! Does the picture of that old congregation, as it "lifted up its voice and wept that night,"—does this surpass our fears, our weakness before duty? Was their trust in the graciousness of God any more feeble and wretched than ours is? I think not.

We lead our lives coldly and poorly. We need trust, and to add to our trust courage. Discouragement ruins us. There is no power of grasp in the hand, and we cannot lay hold on eternal life. And so we live out our poor nerveless days.

Yes, we,—even now,—we who have a Gospel which

pledges salvation to us,—we who have the mercy of God and the might of the Spirit of God assured to us by the blood of the Son of God,—we who have a land of eternal promise opened to us, cannot enter, because we have no trust: the thing is too great for us to do! Why, if there is any thing true it is this,—that man is set forth as were these Israelites, to win a good,—not to stroll up to it by chance, but to win it. We are appointed to reach a wide and rich and peaceable land through enemies. For this, I have said, we need a will which grasps success, and fastens upon it, and will never let it go; and there is no such courage without a fulness of trust in the heart. But this is not all our need. Listen: “But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land.”

That is God's description of the man who wins. “Another spirit,”—a spirit the precise opposite of that of the Hebrew mob,—and “because he hath followed me fully.” Wholeness,—the heart whole. There were good men in the camp; but some part of their hearts went back to Egypt, or to comfort and ease; and they believed in God,—but not in the face of giants. In all that mass there were but two or three persons who followed God “fully.” All the rest had two hearts. God and the world, they worshipped both together. So you see God does not praise Caleb's courage and faith, though he might well have done so. One thing



fixed the divine attention and applause: "He hath followed me fully." "And him will I bring into the land."

The land,—the better land on high,—it is for him, and for all such. I sometimes ask myself: Must all this weak race perish except the handful who have a divine energy in their souls? Ah! Lord God, some of us would follow Thee fully,—but our weakness! Breathe Thou light and strength within us, touch us with a better trust, let us see and live in Thy presence, and feel Thy power, and remember Thy gracious promise. And oh, when we have finished our course here "as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," may we rest in hope, and our record be: "This my servant, because he hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land."

## JOSHUA.

JOSHUA XXIII. AND XXIV.

THESE chapters—the dying words of the great captain Joshua—consist mainly of one great appeal to the Hebrew nation to stand aloof from the other inhabitants of Canaan. The first thing that strikes us in the career of Joshua is the singular, stern, even merciless treatment of the Canaanites by the conquering Hebrews,—a treatment, too, not springing from the mere impulses of war and vengeance, but exacted of them by their leaders under the solemn command of their God.

Properly to vindicate this, we must remember that it was only a part of a great policy,—of one aim to make the nation which alone had right views of God a separate nation, that they might be kept pure from idolatrous contamination and educated in religion with an ultimate regard to the enlightenment, not of themselves only, but of the whole earth. The necessity of separation in order to do this no one in our day can adequately understand; for no one now can realize the fascinating power of the idolatry and rites of the nations, and of the fact that all the earth was one way, and a mere handful of people the other. It was literally impossible to resist it. Such is the sympathy and the social nature of man for

good or for evil, that there was no mode of beginning or carrying on the existence of a few higher people save by a merciless separation from a whole world of the lower. They must in all ways make a solitude around them, as of an island cut off from the main land of the world's corruption. And this principle of separation is found through all religious history, and exists until this moment in all monkish and ascetic associations. But what was good as God used it—namely, as a fencing in of the tender plant during the first rude ages—became a curse after the truth was strong enough to defend itself; and so, when the strong Lord of Truth came, his message was: "No longer separate; break down all walls of partition; plant not the wheat by itself, but suffer tares and wheat to grow together until harvest."

The Jewish policy was defensive; the Christian policy is aggressive. In the first era the truth said: "I am weak; save me by separating me." In the second era the truth said: "I am strong; sow me as wide as you please on the field of the world." And, believe me, the Christianity of every age and of every individual will find an infallible test of its strength or its weakness in the bent, the pressure, the necessity to diffuse itself, to give itself even as widely as the sides of the earth extend,—even to "Greenland's icy mountains, to India's coral strand." It gets up into the high mountains; it cries aloud over deserts; it says: "Behold me!"

But the separation of which I speak was a necessity at

this period, and it was brought about in a wonderful manner. The Hebrews were taken into a wilderness, solitary and separate, and kept there forty years. They then crossed the Jordan, and a land was given them, but on the significant and terrible condition that it should be for the Hebrews alone. Nay, the land itself was chosen with this very idea of separation,—its old inhabitants stripped away or utterly crushed. For as to the rest of the world, the great outlying nations, it was a sheltered nook,—sheltered on all sides and removed by sea, by mountain ranges, by wide deserts, so that the country seemed created to give to this singular tribe solitude as of an eagle's nest on the top of the crags.

But this was only the beginning. This geographical separation would not last long unless it was accompanied by a moral separation. So through the whole scope of their peculiar and terrible experience in the wilderness and afterward,—in all their opinions, laws, usages,—we see the attempt made to separate their souls also. If any person would understand the Mosaic system, he must always remember that this is the great aim, explaining much that is strange, and indicating much that otherwise would be, to say the least, of very doubtful propriety. So the Hebrew was meant to be physically and spiritually separated; and though the result of the effort as to the higher religious heart of the Jew fell far below the intention, yet it was so far successful as to the general character, that the Jewish soul, even of

to-day, and even where it has lost all the higher traits of holy separation, is yet a peculiar and solitary soul, and a lasting wonder in the earth.

Now it is very obvious that such a conception as this, carried out on a national scale, is the most singular thing in history. To be sure, sects, a handful of men acting for something of the same aim and instinct, have withdrawn themselves; all the old religions, especially the Eastern down to Mohammed, have to a degree peculiarized and separated themselves; but all these cases are but as a shadow of the separation of the Jew,—an isolation so marked that we seem to hear in it the very voice of God. The thing was done so sharply, powerfully, comprehensively (from the circumcision of the body up to the circumcision of the whole nature), that if we knew nothing of a divine hand concerned in it, the result might lead us to argue its presence, just as, from the vast mountain ranges thrown up on the earth's surface, we argue the presence of mightier powers acting in the primitive earth.

Now to any one who asks if all this were wise, I answer that it was a necessity, and therefore wise, but that of course it ceased to be wise when the necessity ceased. The wisdom of this amazing record was not in one thing, separation, but in two things, separation and diffusion, and each in its turn. "In the fulness of time,"—that is, when the highest and purest religious truth could have any chance in the world,—the gates of Judaism were

opened, and the very best of the spirit which was at the bottom of Judaism, which had been nourished and made ready through centuries, expanded itself to the world. But those Jews who did not understand the secret aim of their own institutions, which secret aim St. Paul calls a mystery,—who thought that their religion was all a piece of worldly favoritism, that they were the worldly pets of divine Providence,—when they saw One appear who proclaimed that henceforth the true Jew, the real favorite of God, was to be a man of the heart,—who proclaimed that the sonship of God hereafter was to be equally open to all,—who proclaimed, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates!” that all men may come in in equal brotherhood,—when they saw this they resisted with malignity,—resisted, and so were finally pushed aside and scattered like chaff through the earth.

Having thus attempted to vindicate the forcible separation of the Jews during the ages of force, in view of the ultimate purpose of peaceful reunion in better times, I pass on to the leaders in these two movements.

The first Joshua (or Jesus) was the great captain in the work of separation between the Jew and mankind, as the second Joshua (Jesus) was the great captain in the work of reunion between the Jew and mankind, “making both one.”

Look at these two figures. How unlike! The first a man of affairs, a wise, decided ruler, especially a man of war, putting into effect the high designs of Moses with

such promptitude, skill, and resistless force as to sweep the nations before him,—going forth from the fording of the Jordan, at every step conquering and to conquer, blood staining every inch of his way. This was Joshua, the terror of his enemies, the beloved and trusted prince of his people, who died with his victorious work finished, the whole land under his foot, “from Jordan, even unto the great sea westward.”

How unlike in all points, in character, in work, and in destiny, to the man Christ Jesus, who spilt no blood but his own; who, though he himself wept with strong crying, yet caused no tears to others but of penitence and hope,—the being of love, not of hate,—a Captain who led only in the way of peace and reunion, but who perished friendless, an outcast of the people.

No work, no characters, no results, could be more contrasted. Strange, then, that this military Joshua should be one of the chosen and favorite foreshadowings of the Christ! See him, this armed hero, at the head of hosts, of imperial character, in imperial command, whose aim and thought and skill were of destruction, leading on, fearless, deadly, merciless, crowned with blood and victory! See him—and see this! What is this? A man of sorrows, preaching meekness, righteousness, peace, in a tone of unspeakable and tender depth pleading with the world, pouring out His blood, crowned with thorns, nailed in ignominy and defeat to the bitter cross.

Yet in one point they were alike. Both lived for a

will not their own,—the one as a servant, the other as a Son. Joshua carried out his simple ideas, the plan of God as he understood it, with that simplicity and entireness of abandonment which is heroism. Our Christian ideas of peace must not prevent our doing justice to his noble character, or to that noble character, the religious soldier, as he appears in Jewish, and still more strikingly in Christian history. Joshua and the old Jewish soldiers, the crusaders of mediæval times, the Puritan Cromwell and his Roundheads, however mistaken and fanatical, and though they do violence to that pure Dove which has flown into the bosom of humanity, are yet consecrated by this, that according to their light they stood for God and for the right.

“What can alone ennoble fight?

A noble cause!

Give that, and welcome war to brace his drums!”

But no; not welcome war,—never welcome,—only submitted to because of the sad and disgraceful necessities of the world, and its selfish interests.

“The cause of truth and human weal,

O God above!

Transfer it from the sword's appeal

To peace and love.”

Yes; in place of the old banners and old leaders “we now see Jesus,” and though I have said it I repeat that the first Joshua was in his heart a blood-brother even with Christ in this,—that both are of that noble army of



martyrs who offer themselves in sacrifice in obedience to God and for the safety of the people,—yet oh how unspeakably higher, purer, the heroism which submits, which offers its blood and will not take yours! Other heroisms have their work, but this is the noblest of all.

Yes; though the contrast seemed so great at the hour of Calvary between these two styles of conqueror, that was only in appearance,—that was only because the greater the power the more slowly it gets into action. The reconciling power of Christ must have the whole planet for its working-ground, and all the ages for its working-time; so great, so subtle, so lasting is this conquering power.

All the high language of Christ,—his confidence that God was with him, that God was strong, that the fact would be as God willed, that God was Master in his world, no matter how things looked,—“though the heathen raged,”—all this in its rudiments was in the soul of the rude Joshua. He also had religion,—that is, his heart was allied and tied to God. He, in the face of the black and swarming crowd, maintained his allegiance to the right; and so he was victor, conqueror; and he made a brutish land, noisome with idols, into the land of God,—even as the great Conquestor has made, is making, and will make this besotted earth of ours, in the face of men and devils, into a divine earth, a kingdom of God. Strip away all the wrappings, get at the one thing which makes all God’s men alike,—truly men, truly human,

truly divine,—what is it? It is this familiarity with God, confidence in him, consolation in his kindness, force in his strength, and, as a necessary result, victory over self, over the evil that is in the world.

I call attention to the farewell, dying words of Joshua. He gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and recounted the wonderful history of the Jews before him and under him. He shows how magnificently God had led them forward. It is a proud record of their national glory, all springing from the favorable hand of God. With such a record what a grand future was possible! The contrary was also possible. And so he calls them to choose whom they will serve. But there was one vast condition,—that this God really should be chosen and held to as their God; and in the way of this there was one vast difficulty. For this was a righteous God, demanding righteousness, and severe toward the faithless, so that it was no slight thing to be the servant of such a God. All high things have corresponding requirements. There were gods all round them whom it would be easy to serve,—pleasant gods, who seemed to exact nothing, but to meet fully all the low desires of the heart,—gods, moreover, whom they could see, and not some distant shadow.

Joshua knew the difficulties, and so before leaving them he wanted them to come to some solemn and deep and immovable decision. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." "Choose ye," he said; "but as for me

and my house, we will serve the Lord." "Fickle multitudes, governed by fashion or ingratitude or self-indulgence, may serve whom they will; but as for me, I will serve the Lord,"—so speaks the true servant.

Moved, the people answer: "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods." But Joshua wisely wished them to count the cost deliberately in this great moment; so he concealed nothing, but opened the whole deterring prospect and said: "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God, so that if ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, he will turn and do you hurt after that he hath done you good." And the people said unto Joshua: "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." And Joshua said: "Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him." And they said: "We are witnesses."

So he made a solemn covenant, and wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and set up a great stone under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. Every thing was done, in short, to bind the heart irrevocably; and not without effect, for it seems that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel."

Therefore, be not discouraged. If you are no more like to Christ than a rude and cruel Jewish warrior,—if nature

or circumstances have so shaped you that no church meets your need,—God will meet it in some way. Be something in your own fashion. Christianity is not the narrow thing we make it. Paul said: "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, etc., think on these things." Christ said: "He that is not against us is for us." Courage, then! and sweep away your prejudices. Wherever you can catch the simple air of sonship to God, or allegiance to any high thing, running through a life, like the fine strain permeating what seems a chaos of music, there in that fine silver thread the Spirit of God is, and, believe me, it will in time bring that whole chaotic mass into harmony.

Joshua, the national hero and prince, is the shadow; the poor and simple Galilean the substance. It is singular how little we have advanced. Every man is very much as his ideal is; to that he insensibly shapes himself. What is ours? The message I bring you is: Advance your ideal. What is immortal, substantial, beautiful? The things of the heart; the rest but "wood, hay, stubble." "Choose the things which are excellent."

## ELI.

### I. SAMUEL I.

IN the early days of Israel, before the kings, and before the great prophet Samuel appeared, there was an old and patriarchal priest and prophet, Eli, who ruled in Israel, and who, together with his two sons, ministered in the tabernacle at Shiloh.

Now one day when Eli, the priest, sat upon a seat in the temple of the Lord, he saw a woman acting very strangely, moving her lips, but uttering no words, for she was speaking eagerly in her heart unto the Lord. And Eli supposed she was drunken. But Hannah answered and said: "No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord."

Where there is *utterness* of feeling the looks and ways may be wild enough, as was the case with the believers at Pentecost, who seemed to be drunk with new wine; and could any thing have better expressed the agony of this woman's prayer than this wild and drunken look? It was prayer indeed, and in an age when people believed that God did hear and did answer. She was a childless Hebrew wife, and because childless was jeered and

scorned in her own home, and so her life became intolerable, and she prayed in the open temple as if she were wrestling in agony with God. Then the good Eli said to her, "Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." And she answered in a beautiful and submissive fashion, "Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight." And she "went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad"; for her simple soul now believed that with her prayer, united to the prayer of the Lord's great priest, the thing for which she longed would be given her.

And so it was, for the Lord gave her Samuel; and you will see how fit it was that the prayer should have been answered as it was when you see how this mother acted afterward. Her gratitude was not a keen sense of benefits yet to come. She grows in a permanent gratitude and nearness to God, and feels, moreover, a tender longing to give him back his good gift. So when the child is weaned she takes him and her sacrificial offerings up with her to the temple at Shiloh, comes before Eli, and says: "O my lord! as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord." Then holding up the child: "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

Then she breaks out into that inspired hymn of thanks, beginning, "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord," and going

on to celebrate God as the God of the destitute and afflicted.

Her little story of sorrow and joy and her song of thanks seem to be a prelude or first taste of the greater story and song of Mary to come long after; and it strikes, it seems to me, the first strong note of the Gospel: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord. \* \* \* There is none holy as the Lord: \* \* \* neither is there any rock like our God. \* \* \* He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among princes. \* \* \* Talk no more so exceeding proudly. \* \* \* The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength."

So she lent her child unto the Lord, and "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice."

Henceforward the picture in the narrative of the aged Eli and the young Samuel is quite beautiful. There was the fine old man laden with the experience and dignity of years, and there was the blooming, innocent boy, carrying in him a mighty future, ministering together before the Lord: both sacred figures, each giving a peculiar relief to the other; the aged man looking down, the child looking up,—a sort of ideal of that relation of youth and age which is now seen so rarely, but which, when-

ever it is seen, is always morally picturesque and charming.

But the beauty of this picture soon underwent a terrible change. For it came to pass that the Lord had a revelation to give, a revelation even of the destruction of Eli and his whole house,—for they had done wrong,—and that revelation of terror is to be given through the child Samuel. The sad cause was this: Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were priests under him, but were clear sons of Belial, shocking priests, a scandal to the father, a scandal to the temple, and the ruin of the people. And the good but weak Eli, because he had not restrained his sons, was in some sort a partner in their sins, and was a partner in their doom. The knowledge of this was to come to the poor old man through the lips of Samuel. “And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place in the temple, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see, and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple, and when Samuel was laid down to sleep, that the Lord called Samuel, and he answered: Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said: Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said: I called not; lie down again.”

And this was repeated until the third time, when, being instructed by Eli, the child went no more to him, but said: “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Then the awful doom was pronounced, and to the child it was given to disclose it to Eli. Thus the doom



of Eli was pronounced to him, even as he watched in the temple where he was priest, even in his old age, and by the voice of a beloved child. Sad enough for Eli; and as for Samuel, sad also, to be sure, but at the same time laying upon his young soul such a sense of God, of the sanctity of His service, of the terrors of His justice, that perhaps from that hour dates the beginning of his great prophetic career.

The character of Eli is seen, I think, at a glance: sweet and beautiful virtues, but fatal weakness. We have seen his kindly interest and sympathy with Hannah; we have seen his sweet relations with the child Samuel; and throughout we get the impression, I hardly know how, that he was, in the most beautiful sense, a priest of the Lord, living in the temple as his sacred home. Observe how gently and incuriously he gives place and precedence to a child, in that highest of all dignities,—namely, that of receiving in the temple the revelation of the Lord,—he, the judge and high priest of the nation, being set aside for a mere boy. Observe, also, when he hears the awful doom of his house, how he meets it: “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.” And observe the old man, at last, when he sits by the wayside watching and waiting for the tidings of the battle with the Philistines. The news comes that his sons are slain. *He makes no sign*, and waits until the last word of the tidings rushes in,—“and the ark of God is taken.” That touches the centre of his heart; he

sinks, falls to the ground, and dies ! And observe, that while he dies under the penalty of God, yet the news that kills him is the news of the disaster to the ark of his God. The sting of death is from no personal loss, but he dies from his attachment to the ark of God.

Such on the fair side was Eli. But if so, why so severe a penalty to such a man ? I answer, it expresses God's sense of the guilt of parental weakness, or of any weakness in high and respectable places. Eli seems to have been one of those easy, unsolicitous, unobserving, good men who, partial to their children, let them go on very much as they will,—the very opposite of that fine picture of Abraham : “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him.” Eli does not seem even to see the monstrous excesses of his sons until the knowledge reaches him through others,—like many other men ever attending to what they call their business, their duties, and ever neglecting their highest claims, especially those of the family. When Eli is reminded of this evil, he grieves, no doubt, and feelingly upbraids the sons, gently and solemnly advising them : “Nay, my sons ; for it is no good report that I hear ; ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him ; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him ? ”

This is very solemn and tender, no doubt, but it comes *too late*, and there is felt in it, besides, an air of gentle weakness. He does not even here rise up with the power

demand. These sons were monsters, thieves of the temple offerings, polluters of its sanctity, ruining the religious and moral sense of the people, and thus destroying the nation itself at the root of its life, so that when the Philistines came against them, even the presence of the ark itself in battle could do nothing for them. All this, it seems, had its origin in the weakness of Eli. We might call it but an amiable weakness, and say that such sons were the misfortune of Eli rather than his fault. But in so doing we should judge foolishly. Eli could not, perhaps, have made Hophni and Phinehas admirable men or admirable priests, for nature has much to say about this; but, beginning early, he could have made them decent; or, if not that, then at least he could have done something to shut them out of the sacred priesthood to which his miserable partiality allowed their promotion.

Eli, instead of keeping his house pure, erected bad examples, like two statues, before the eyes of the people, and so merited the old Hebrew curse: "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way; and all the people shall say, Amen."

Nay, when he was at last distinctly forewarned, yet he did nothing; a habit of feebleness held him. He seemed to have reached the time when all discoveries of the future, however ample and terrible, were not voices of guidance, but simple proclamations of doom. In that state, alas! are those in whom solemn warning has ceased to excite even good resolutions.

This tragic history shows in the first place the guilt of a father's or mother's weakness. The expression will seem harsh, but is made in no such spirit; for nothing can be more pitiable than the perversion of the divine paternal instinct to the ruin of the child and the misery of the parent. The affection is often so partial that it is practically blind, and it is so pure and generous and tender that to restrain it and to control the child or the youth requires a sort of violence upon the heart. The whole soul becomes softened into a weak and guilty pity, so that at times the noblest act of parental self-restraint seems to the parent a sort of harshness and guilt. Parental indulgence is a vice, yet there is perhaps no vice which looks so fair to the parents themselves,—which looks so much like a virtue; and while there is no vice so self-justifying, there is at the same time none more real, and none more terrible in its penalties. For what is there worse than a ruined child? The experience of filial ingratitude and baseness cuts like a knife; it is "sharper than a serpent's tooth." Amiable weakness as parental indulgence seems, we must judge its real character by the divine treatment of old Eli; nay, we must judge it by the divine treatment of weak parents all over the world. We must estimate it by the degree and quality of its fruits. And these fruits must be tasted as often by the good as by the bad, for good people are not always good parents, and bad people are not always bad parents. As an example: I have often observed that the

children of somewhat selfish, or at least self-regarding parents, who exact much, are unselfish; while merely generous and tender parents foster the seeds of selfishness and vanity in the child.

But to return: Everywhere the acts of God say more plainly than words: "Form no delusions; weakness is vice, and weakness in parents often carries doom with it."

It is most painful to reflect that that affection which seems to me nearer perfect than any thing else that is human, is yet, from excess, from want of control, a source of so much evil. A spirit wandering over this earth, and sick with its sordid selfishness, might still think it worth redemption, when he saw in every land the mother's and the father's heart. But alas! if he waited to see the parental conduct and its results, he would turn away in disappointment and gloom. It is not that mothers and fathers have not a sense of responsibility. They have it often in a great and overwhelming degree. But there is a sort of madness in it; for while, on the one hand, they feel responsible for a thousand things which they can no more control than they can the workings of the planets, and which they must leave to God; yet, on the other hand, as to their blind partialities and blind indulgence they are scarcely concerned at all. Ah! it is not enough to have the child, to receive the child, but to have the feeling of Hannah to lend it to the Lord, to furnish it with whatsoever is noble, just, honorable, and lovely, and so adorned with flowers to give it back on the altar to Him from whom it came.

But I pass now to the guilt of all like weaknesses of the affections. Satan in the garb of "an angel of light" is the most powerful Satan. Some good feeling, adorning and gilding evil, is the chief seduction of mankind. The light which leads astray seems light from heaven. Life and literature are not made dangerous by the base and ugly forms of vice, but by vice beautified with some of the affections. Like Jael it brings "butter in a lordly dish," but the nail and the hammer are behind.

Wherever there is a great wrong, if you look you will find some fine feeling to justify it. John thought his violence and malignity a noble indignation when he asked for lightning to blast the Samaritans, but he knew not what spirit he was of. Peter felt that it was an affectionate sympathy with his Master, and jealousy for His honor, when he said: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. These shames and humiliations do not belong unto thee!" But to this tender zeal the Lord said: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Now this sternness of real truth cuts through our half good and half evil, our sentimentalisms, our words "softer than butter"! We must then be steel itself with innocent weaknesses, so called, whether they be in ourselves or in others; for weaknesses are the first sproutings of a gigantic twist of wrong, the first act in the great tragedy of guilt and shame. Words mislead us. We say, "A weakness, and that is not much," and so dismiss it.

The last remark suggested is this, that the guilt of weakness is in some degree proportioned to our position and influence. The same Eli, at the head of a private family, his sphere narrowed to its limits, would not have been the Eli we are speaking of. This is obvious enough ; yet is the fact felt that your responsibility and mine rises according to public place, place in the church, wealth ? Does a man remember as he gets wealth or seeks power or influence, or does a woman remember as she covets position, that the guilt of our weaknesses grows as we grow in power, and that if we seek to go higher, the first thing we should attend to is the purification of self ?

The elevation of a man is justified only when he thus becomes a source of wider benefit. But if we are not equal to that, at least no man should dare to go higher, if he is to carry his baleful weaknesses with him, and to set them on the top of a hill. This is a most solemn duty which can never be violated unless by gross ignorance as to itself or by a base conceit and selfishness.

We also owe a great duty in this matter as to the elevation of others. What a crime it is if we place a kind man but a weak soldier at the head of a hundred thousand men, when these men, and perhaps a nation, rest upon him ! What a crime it is if we make an unfit king or president, on whom a world of results hang ! We need a conscience, much conscience as to this, to stop weakness from ascending to power. For weakness can

never ascend to power unless it ends in doom, and perhaps even in the loss of the ark of God.

We are filled with weaknesses, and we are in a world of penalties. We must do our best. But no one can do very well unless he feels himself in habitual communication with that Source of light and strength "without which nothing is strong, nothing is holy."



## DAVID.

Then answered one of the servants, and said : Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.—1 SAMUEL xvi., 18.

DAVID is certainly the most interesting figure in Jewish history. The greatest names in this history are those of Abraham and Moses, and perhaps we may add Elias,—Abraham the founder, Moses the institutor, and Elias who as the powerful head of the prophets was the sustainer and rescuer of Israel. These were all simple, colossal figures ; and because of the obscurity of the morning light in which Abraham stands, and because of the colored atmosphere of prodigy and miracle in which they all stand, there is something awful and almost superhuman about them.

But David, with his natural human heart and his wonderful though natural story, comes nearer to us ; yet, in some respects he is at the same time the most imposing of them all. For while in Moses the simple elements of Abraham's faith were expanded into elaborate religion, in David the ideas and hopes of Moses were for the first time taken up, brought fully into accomplishment, and carried higher. In him also the tribes were

united, the whole land was subdued, and the new city of Jerusalem, with the ark brought up upon Mount Zion, was made the centre of national and religious life ; so that it was David who matured the ideas and hopes, not only of the Mosaic, but of the Abrahamic civilization, and it is he who stands on the mountain-top of the Judaic revelation and of the Jewish nation.

But it is of himself, rather than of his importance, that I wish to speak. If I were asked to describe David, I should say in one sentence that he was distinguished by personal presence, by genius, by power, and by a noble simplicity of soul.

In presence he was a beautiful and naturally attractive person, and moreover with that about him which made the aged Samuel fasten at once on him as the future king of Israel. You remember the story. When a new king was to be designated, the seven sons of Jesse were made to pass before the prophet. Of each of them he said : "The Lord hath not chosen this." But when Eliab was come, tall and beautiful, the prophet looked on him and said : "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." But the prophet's standard of taste was not high enough, and the Lord said : "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him." And Samuel said unto Jesse : "Are here all thy children?" And he said : "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep."

So the young David was sent for and brought in, fresh

from the fields and in the flush and animation of the occasion. "Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said: Arise, anoint him; for this is he." Why? If he is goodly to look to, Eliab is taller and fair to look to also; but this one has a beauty which means something. "That is the best part of beauty which a portrait cannot express," and there was an indescribable something about David above and through his fair looks. So the Lord, who looks to the heart, was satisfied here. And I wish that we in our admirations and choices of men and women would learn the same rule and look more as the Lord looks, upon the heart.

This high and attractive something is seen in David all through his life, and accounts for much of his singular power over others,—for example, over Saul and Jonathan. The friendship of Jonathan for David, the love of the king's son for the shepherd boy, a love, all-sacrificing, almost adoring, and "passing the love of women,"—the love and fear of Saul, the king,—the attraction which drew friends and servants and even his enemies through his life,—all have some relation, I think, to the peculiar personal magic of his presence.

Then, next, his genius. He was the first great master of Hebrew poetry and music. While a boy, it seems, with his sheep on the hill-side, he had become a cunning player on the harp; and so he was sent to play before the king, the dark, disturbed, and half-insane Saul; and

there was such a soul in the boy's harp, a spirit of such beauty and peace, that it was of power to hush and soothe even Saul's perturbed heart. "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp and played with his hand, so Saul was refreshed, and the evil spirit departed from him"; and ever since, that same harp, played by the cunning hand of David, has purified sin and allayed sorrow, and its voice, as if it were the voice of an angel,—nay, rather, as if it were the voice of humanity itself in its most ingenuous, humble, and adoring moods,—has mastered the evil spirit which is in the whole world. The Psalms of David—those Hebrew hymns, not so much composed as sung in moments of deepest feeling, right out of the bosom, sung to the sound of his delicate harp—began an era in the world far greater than the founding of dynasties or even of civilizations. Unite the genius of the poet with the genius of a great founder in religion and state, and you have the genius of David.

Next, his personal power. By power I mean that combination of thought and will which makes a man of heroic mould in both war and peace. As to will in war, or valor, "he was a mighty valiant man, and a man of war" from his youth,—not a hero of the stupid sort, distinguished because wanting and dead in the finer susceptibilities of human nature, but all alive, with the heart of a woman in the soul of a man. This strength, blended with wisdom and with that personal magic of

his, gave success to all his dealings with men, from his fine treatment, when he was but a youth, of his master Saul, up to the rulership of his kingdom.

I said last of all (and it is the chief of all) that he was notably susceptible through all the round of his nature, but peculiarly so as to the higher sensibilities of the heart. Such a tone of friendship to his friend, such a tone of loyalty to his king, such generosity and what we call chivalry of spirit! You remember when wounded in battle, a few of his heroes, not counting their blood, in the teeth of the enemy carried off a little water for him from a spring; yet, though dying of thirst, he could drink no water got in that way, but poured it out before the Lord!

But far above all these characteristics stood his singular depth, genuineness, and delicacy of sensibility toward God, the God of Israel. This characteristic of the human spirit, by far its highest,—I mean its sensibilities upward, the reaching out of its affections and trust toward the One altogether pure and invisible, “whom the eye cannot see,”—this which gives man all his true dignity, which allies and which ties the destiny of this earth-creature up to God,—was David’s master-trait, and this moulded and colored all his other qualities.

Observe that. Did I speak of his personal attractions? Fine as they were, you could see through them something higher,—a quality which the simple historian could in no other way describe than by saying the Lord was with him.

Did I speak of his genius? He was the greatest, perhaps I may say the only great, instance in which poetical and musical genius has been quite shone through and transfigured by religion, by a spirit breathed from above,—the only instance in which a great genius sung his songs of penitence and faith as naturally as the old ballad-makers sing of war, or as Burns sings of love. All other religious poetry seems to me not only inferior, but as slightly or broadly unnatural, of another kind.

Did I speak of his heroism? He was no doubt naturally of a brilliant daring; but if you look closely at him, you will see that the sense that he stood with God and for God was the spirit of his heroism, even from boyhood. That lesson which we read every year,—the story of his contest with Goliath of Gath,—apart from the beauty and interest of the tale, has something in it which makes one thrill. It is a story of the noblest religion—that is, trust, fast trust in God—put in practice, not in churches or in talk, but on a battle-day, face to face against odds. To stand for God, so to believe in, love, trust his father's God, he, a rustic boy against a mailed giant,—to do this, where there seemed not a hope but destruction, is in essence as sublime a religion as I know how to present.

The armies lay in the valley of Elah, and there the champion Goliath defied the army of Israel and put it to shame, for no man felt that he could meet the giant. It was a period of intense mortification, and threatened entire overthrow to the courage of the Israelitish soldiers.

The young David, coming down from the hills with some provision for his family in the army, runs to the front, according to his nature, and there sees all the confusion and shame, and hears with his own ears the challenges and boasts of Goliath. At once his spirit breaks out : "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" But his eldest brother checks him, and rebukes the high spirit of the boy, and mortifies him. "Why hast thou come down here, deserting the sheep? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart." So the finest enthusiasms are often named, especially in the household, as "pride and naughtiness of heart." But David said, with a mixture of sweetness and spirit: "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?"

So he was not hushed or stopped, but with this ingenu-ousness, and with this fiery boldness and high disdain, he went through the host, saying, "Who is this Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" And Saul the king, hearing of this, sent for David; "and David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him." But Saul, anxious for the credit of his army, does not encourage him. "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine, for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But David said (hear the fine youth put forth his claims): "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him; and when he arose against me, I caught

him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

There was no false modesty here. "If there is no one else on whom this great cause can be staked, here I am, the shepherd boy David ; take me." This is the spirit, simple, irresistible, which has never failed in the world. And Saul said : "Go, and the Lord be with thee." And Saul put on him his own finest and strongest armor,—but none of this. David put them off him. "I cannot go with these." He was willing to rely on his shepherd's sling and five smooth stones out of the brook.

Perhaps this was not entirely religious faith ; perhaps it was what I may call natural faith, confidence in the things he could do, however simple and seemingly unfit. I may say in this was exhibited one of the rarest qualities of human nature. Men are influenced by others, by the customary, by the powerful-looking. David, though but a youth, could stand on his own judgment, with all opinion astonished or even sneering. David, with the instinct of his genius, saw that in a common fight with armor and arms he could be no match for this enemy. He must succeed, if at all, in his own peculiar way, and he had the assurance of heart to take his own way. I wish all men would learn that great lesson of taking their own way, where they are right,—of not being tyrannized over by custom,—and especially that in religion we



would never consent to wear other people's armor, but fight the great battle of life against greater enemies than Goliath with that peculiar sort of strength which each man has as his own.

So they met ; and when the giant saw with contempt a fair boy coming toward him with his sling in his hand, the boy answered his contempt with a depth of power : "The Lord will deliver thee into mine hand, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." And it came to pass that David hasted and ran (with joyous confidence and courage) to meet the Philistine, and slew him. "And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner the captain of the host took him and brought him before Saul. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, young man?" Mark the transcendent modesty which closes this scene of sublime valor : "David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite."

I repeat, then, that a sense as deep as his being, that he stood with God and for God, was the spirit of all his heroism and all his better actions. Amid the flash and dazzle of his brilliant qualities, it is this which is truly admirable. He lived in a time which was to ours half-barbarous, he was capable of actions cruel and criminal, but at the centre the soul was not only right but sublimely right. He could stake, and it was the habit of his life to stake, all of himself against all odds, in the very jaws of annihilation, on the assurance that there was a

living God, that He was righteous and true, and that nothing could prevail against Him. On this rock he stood, and on this rock he lived and acted.

Now if religion and all virtue be (as it is) to risk something, in confidence that duty and God are the highest things, then David, dark and erring as he often was, was one of the grandest patterns of men. O that we, tempted to cowardice, to meanness, to any unholiness, held to the living God like David, went with Him daily, trusted Him entirely, not gloomily, but cheerfully and victoriously, as David did !

I have not been speaking of a merely brave, heroic, wise man. I have been showing how fine natural qualities were lighted up, transfigured, and nobly employed by one quality, the actualization of God,—and that just this made David a model religious patriot, religious hero, religious king, and altogether one of the highest models of a man. “I have set the Lord always before me” (they are his own words); “because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” It was this which made this Jewish king the foreshadow of that other King whom in due time the Lord was to set upon His holy hill. Yes; while it seems unworthy to say that David or any of the Old Testament men were even shadows of Christ, for they were but impure sparks to that pure luminary,—they were but as a long row of street lamps in a city to the risen moon as we emerge from the end of the street into the open fields,—still, amid all inferiorities

and differences, most strange is the hidden likeness,—the same apprehension of the invisible, the same nearness and childlike relation to God, a sort of domestic association with Him, something of the same power drawn from the same union with Him ; so that without irreverence we may call David a rude and warlike type of the coming King, of the One truly fair.

Here, then, is the excellence of David, and all this is for our learning. What fine natural gifts have we ? What superiorities ? What masteries of any sort ? Be they as high as heaven, if left to themselves how ugly with selfishness they become ! There must be something higher, deeply infused, deeply controlling. I have shown what it is. I have given David as the illustration of it on the one side ; let me select two noted cases, where this something is wanting, on the other side. In choosing these I shall not be deterred by the commonness of the examples. I shall take Napoleon and Lord Byron, the two well-known idols of the last age.

I admit all that will be said of the genius of Napoleon, and of the matchless facility and power of his spirit. He armed himself with the material forces of Europe, wielded a world with ease,—was, in short, a splendid object,—and in intellectual faculty as a hero and king was of quite other dimensions than David. But who admires the *man* ? Who but boys and boyish natures ? At the bottom of the whole, I do not find the greatness. The spirit was low and mean, and in some aspects

frightful to the eye. Why ? There was no God in him or before him ; and at the side of David the man sinks out of comparison.

Then the other great darling of the earth, Lord Byron, a poet indeed,—a poet of beauty and of the romantic imagination, but not a poet of the better heart,—a poet of the poorer heart, who powerfully felt many things and sang them ; but they were rarely or never the highest and purest things of the human soul ; his heart mastered no evil spirits, its finest tones were never “airs from heaven,” and sometimes were “blasts from hell.” Still he was a dazzling sight to young or crude minds, with his beauty and genius and silly, selfish woes. But at the bottom who does not know that this was a pitiable and by no means admirable person ? I can rest on little I find in him—I mean in the man himself—except with indignation or sorrow, or, if it were ever allowed, with contempt. He quite wanted that sweetening and uplifting something that was rich in David’s heart.

Because the Spirit of the Lord was in David, and on the whole ruled him, his acts, his songs, have become the precious heritage of the world,—a stream not to defile but to make glad the city of God. I assert that there is nothing beneficial, permanent, truly great in the human soul in any age—under Hebrew light or Christian—which has not David’s sensibility to God. To know that he is there, to fear nothing so much as him, to walk before him, in terrible moments to trust all to

him, to be glad when we obey him ("I rejoice to run in the way of thy commandments"), to be sorry when we have transgressed ("Have mercy upon me, O God"), when we fall to rise again ("Cast me not away from thy presence"), to trust in the love which, like the waters of a great sea, washes away all stains,—this spirit is the redemption of souls; this heart makes a David, and the want of it makes the lowness and curse of men however illustrious.

So far I have eulogized David. But what then? had he no fault? Yes, there is another side to the picture; he was human and had faults. Nay, this type of Christ, as he was, was yet a criminal, and in his history there is a crime so stupendous that I venture to say no other crime in the whole history of the church of God is so wonderful, so incomprehensible; none has brought home to the church such distrust and such sneers. I could wish to deny it, to conceal it, but it cannot be denied; it will not be concealed; it cries aloud; the blood speaks from the ground. I shall speak of it on another occasion, and endeavor to present it fairly. But when the best is done, what is left for him, for ourselves, for our common humanity, but to put our hands on our mouths and our mouths in the dust? It was fit, perhaps, that amid so much true glory, so much to exalt, we should be made to feel what poor things we all are,—that in our best estate we should constantly remember that the man, even though he be the best of our race, who withdraws

his hand from God, sinks; but to remember also that though he sinks, yes, farther and deeper than human pity can forgive, if the heart turns back, there is forgiveness and everlasting pity. "Out of the deeps (*de profundis*) have I called unto thee!" That cry is never heard in vain.

David's crime was, I think, one of the greatest (every thing taken into view) ever committed on the earth. And that he has survived this crime, and seems still beautiful and grand, will measure to us the greatness of his repentance and the extraordinary spiritual glory of the man. There he stands, high and clear, with all his beauty, washed in the mercy and pity of God!—washed and made clean!

## DAVID : HIS SIN AND REPENTANCE.

But now thy kingdom shall not continue : the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people.—1 SAMUEL xiii., 14.

So Samuel the prophet said to the foolish king Saul, —that he would put him aside, for he was unfit, and put David, a very different sort of king, in his place.

The expression, “a man after God’s heart,” has been sadly abused, on the one hand by silly sneerers at the Bible, and on the other hand by commentators, who mean to defend the Bible, but know not how to do it. The sneerers say that God when he spoke so committed himself to the judgment that David was a perfect man ; and the commentators answer : Not so ; the words were used only of David as a king, that is, officially,—that he was a good ruler. But really all this is trifling. Ignorance of the spirit of these writings makes nine tenths of the difficulties in them. When Samuel said that David was a man after God’s own heart, he was not speaking as a mathematician, but in the ordinary manner. I have known people after my own heart whose history, if I went back through it, would show me some stains not after my own heart, “for there is no man that sinneth not.” God is a just Judge, and if in the main he is

pleased with a man, he will in friendly moments call him "a man after his own heart," though afterward, when the man has sinned, he will resent and punish deeply his faults.

If we are to take each expression of the Bible, and give it all the force of which it is capable, not judging it by the usages of human speech and of Jewish speech, we shall not read one page without meeting some glaring untruth.

But here there is at least a high encomium of David; yes, and it is true. I have spoken of the glories of David. But I will now change my text, and show you the other side,—show you that though he was worthy of love and praise it is in the face of deep and almost inexpressible crime. My text now is: "Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife," a sad theme,—shocking,—still it will be useful to speak of it.

In David's career there are acts questionable and bad, but this stands alone. He is enchanted with the beauty of a woman, and takes her to himself with a high hand. But that is only the beginning. He then attempts meanly to cover up his crime, but, failing in that, he commands that her husband, Uriah, be set in the hottest place of the battle, and so secures his destruction. And, beyond this, when the order was given he had just seen the most affecting proof of Uriah's noble character, and devotion to himself. An awful baseness! "Let this man die, and quickly!"



But we must do justice. There are two great dangers in speaking of crime generally,—the danger of harshly judging, and that of weakly excusing,—and I hardly know which is worse. As to this case, the very worst and harshest aspect of it is presented in the narrative, and left entirely unexplained. So, as I wish to do the criminal no injustice, I must state it as it is.

There are three things to be said which may be palliatives; at least they will enable us to understand the matter as it is. First, we must remember the old superstition as to kings, especially in the countries east of Judea. There kings were men set above moral rules; their wish was law; the king was a human god, and his wish made wrong things right. We have seen the same in our own race, and as late as two or three hundred years ago. It was actually reduced to a philosophy by Hobbes, and sanctioned, or winked at, even by the English church dignitaries. Now the Jews, we ought never to forget, partook deeply of the spirit of the East. The Jew was an oriental, and, in some respects, an oriental of the orientals. But, besides, they were at this time directly influenced, in all their ideas and feelings about royalty, by the example of those great Eastern empires to which this little nation now looked up. The new-made Jewish kings took at once, and keenly, the spirit of those old dynasties. According to that spirit, the subject was the absolute property of the monarch. The king took very much what he wished, and sacrificed what

life he chose, as his natural prerogative. Man, even now, easily confuses power with right, but to primitive man the things are hardly separated, hardly separable. If these things are remembered, and, besides, if you think how many crimes are prevented by prudence and fear,—how much of what is called virtue consists in different forms of prudence and fear,—you will be better able to judge of the crimes of Eastern kings,—men set above prudence and fear, set in the situation of gods, without the virtue of gods.

Second, our present ideas of the Bible, and of what we call the Old-Testament saints, give us false expectations. We think of them as half-divine. But we know that the Old-Testament truth is a dawning day, and so we should remember that the Old-Testament men, also, are men of the dawn. Fresher, sublimer, no men can be than some of them at times,—but they are fine statues, only yet half-hewn,—one half of the face may be divine, as of a god; the other half, as yet, in block.

The religious man of that day and the religious man of this day are two persons; and, if we do not think of this, we must do injustice to the great but irregular characters of those early times.

So, particularly as to David. In an age of polygamy, and in an age of blood, the two great crimes of David were great enough, to be sure, but not at all as the same crimes to-day. To-day, the same sense of God would be utterly inconsistent with the same crimes. The two

things could not go together. But the sneerer, ignorant of this, settles it at once, in his ignorance, and by one word, *hypocrisy* ! Now, if there ever breathed a man untainted by hypocrisy, it was this man. No such explanation is possible.

But some one will say : " We do not judge David by the ideas of Christianity, but we judge him by his own writings." Ah ! to be sure, there is an awful disparity. This man, and the man who wrote the Psalms, seem at first like two beings. O the gulf ! But when we judge him by the highest ideas of his own age, much more by these Psalms, which were far above his own age or any age, we are too severe. For to judge any man by his own familiar letters is often to apply a severe test ; to judge him by his formal writings is more severe ; but when, beyond this, we place side by side the solitary aspirations, in his best moments, of one period of a man's life, with the passionate and passing faults of one dark hour ; when we condemn as a hypocrite a most fervid soul, because he could overflow with divine feeling and yet, on one occasion, fall into a mean and devilish act,—then we become ignorant, unjust, cruel.

In the third place, we should remember the possession, the exclusive occupation, of some hearts, by any intense feeling which once takes hold of them, literally blinding the soul to every thing else. This may be some palliation of crime or may not be, but at least it will be well to remember it.

Now this narrowness in the Hebrew race was so peculiar that it is not only a proverb, but has been so ever since they became known to the nations. And what is the meaning of this Jewish narrowness? It is not the narrowness of ignorance, or of poor faculties, but the narrowness of intensity,—such a contracting force in the feelings as to shut out every thing but the one thing before them! There is a blinding effect in all sin,—what the apostle calls the “deceivableness, or deceptiveness, of unrighteousness.” But a race so intense, when once set wrong, trod the pathway down to death with as much assurance as if it were walking upward in the path of life. I say an intense heart must always, for the time, be a narrow and blind heart. Now David was the most intense man of his race. His life is aglow all through, filled with intensities. But is this any palliation? Perhaps not,—but I state it. There are people whose nature is such that the eyes once fixed are fascinated. They are like horses with blinders on a public road, literally shut up to every object but the road before them. And this narrowness of intensity, you may observe, is a source of great virtues, as well as of crimes. I see it all through the Jewish history, now working good, now working ill. I see it in Peter, and John, and the first church of Jewish Christians. I see it in David, as he now mounts up to heaven and now goes down to hell.

One thing more will end my explanations for David.

There may be no weight in the fact that he was like an Eastern king, or that he shared the infirmities of the men of early times, or that he was of a peculiarly impassioned and intense nature. Whatever force all this may have, I put it aside, that I may just say this one thing; David's crime was great, but his repentance was as great as his crime. When you think of the wrong, when it mounts so high that you give up all defence, then read over the fifty-first Psalm.

To any heart that truly enters into the feeling of that Psalm (perhaps not a living man *can*) I need not say one word more to place David exactly where he ought to be placed, not as excused (unspeakably far from that); not, perhaps, as palliated, but as understood, as separated widely from the men capable of the same crimes but not in the least capable of the same repentance.

This man seems to me, in his splendid genius, his brilliant valor, his personal and kingly graces, but far above these, in his native chivalry and generosity, his pity, his magnanimity, and, at the top, in his sublime nearness to God, his trust in him, his powerful, yearning love to his fathers' God, to his church and country,—that is, to every thing good and divine,—in these things, in a soul filled with the richest sensibilities of love, of sorrow, of agony, and pouring itself forth in those singular songs which will touch and purify the human heart so long as it is human, this man seems to me half-divine, yet this same man was a robber, a murderer of his faithful

servant. What shall I say of him? I shall say that the prodigies and miracles of the heart are greater than those of nature. I shall say that though David is in history one of those great rivers which have watered the earth, yet this splendid stream, while reflecting images of heaven, is darkened also with the blackest shadows of earth. But I shall add that his sin, which *was* black, is forgiven, for he repented much, and loved much !

Now this history could suggest many thoughts. Let me offer a few of them. For example, our idolatries and contempts are corrected here. If a man ascends rather high, we at once go to work to idealize him ; or, if a man shocks us, we give him up, and think no good of him. Both feelings are false, both pernicious. This singular aptness of our imagination (if once inflamed), in turning men into gods or devils, gives, indeed, the interest of a strong light and shade to life, and to the records of history. But it is false, I repeat, and pernicious. I know of no devils, even among men who are half-insane ; and I know of but One on whom the fervors of our admiration and love may safely be spent.

Again : this story of the king and poet of the old church, like the "denial of Peter" in the new church, seems designed to shock us into a just sense of the frailty of the best. We build on man, especially on our highest men. But what *is man?* and "wherein is he to be accounted of?"

I know that hero-worship has lifted the world, and led

it forward through all its history. But we must be made to know that God is better than man, that we can build only on God, that "God is our Rock, and the high God our Redeemer." "Cease ye from man."

Note here the use God makes of sin. He manufactures, we know, light out of the blackness. The most exquisite souls are formed over again, either out of their own sins, like David, or out of others' sins, like the Son of David. We may be created anew, I say, either from the wrongs we do, as David was, or from the wrongs we suffer, as Christ was (the new David), who "learned obedience by the things which he suffered." And there is the same hope for all men through the same sad process,—hope, that at last, far off, we may come like new silver out of the furnace.

Some, if they have sinned, perish from discouragement and hopelessness. But, whatever the sins, if there is left one living point in the heart, there is hope. In the cellars and depths of a great building consumed and reduced to ashes, and to bare fragments of wall; at the bottom of all this cold ruin, if there lies deep in the rubbish one smouldering spark, it may be blown into a world of flame and heat. Hope then for sin. But, on the other hand, let there be no self-complacency. We need not spend our self-complacent astonishment on David. It were better that we spent our astonishment on ourselves, for we are but miniature pictures of him. Of course, I do not mean that his crimes are our crimes.

Each man has his own style of weakness. But I do mean that we are all the same astonishing mixture, "of different natures, marvellously mixed,—a worm, a god!"

As we share, then, in the weakness of David, my last and pressing thought is, Do we share in his penitence? If there be any thing fit, becoming such creatures as we are, so foolish, so inconsistent, so wrong, it is that we stand and say: "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." Look back, I pray you, one moment at his penitence. Opposite the very page which makes David a monster, or side by side with it, I wish we could place the fifty-first Psalm, and let them stand there fronting each other,—there the picture of a guilty soul, here the picture of that soul in agonies! "Have mercy upon me, O God!" "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity."

I have been trying to state the case justly for David. But he did not care to state it so for himself. He never says, "It is bad enough, *but*"—not a word of it. All is admitted,—the worst. He seems to himself guilty, even from *his very root*. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity." "Create in me a clean heart." "Cast me not away from thy presence." "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God." "I would give thee sacrifice, but thou wouldest not; but *perhaps* thou wilt not despise a broken heart; I lay it broken at thy feet!"



## JABEZ.

And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren : and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me ! And God granted him that which he requested.—1 CHRON. iv., 9, 10.

THE genealogy in which this text is found runs through nine chapters. Such lists contrast with any other known genealogy in simplicity, comprehensiveness, and moral effect. As in counting stars we gradually gain impressions of the extent of numbers, so here ! But these names represent generations. So, in recounting them, it is as in looking above on a calm night : our own littleness, fugitiveness, is felt ; and with the feeling comes the hush of care and pride ; for in this sweep and rush of generations there is nothing for us but calm, adoring rest in that bosom which shall keep us from nothingness !

Now amid this long, dry roll of the dead, the story of Jabez appears as a green and peaceful islet in the waste, —living with human interests. There must have been something of particular attraction in this story ; for, from the name of Adam, down to that of the houses of Jonathan and Saul, the attention of the chronicler was arrested very few times indeed, and rarely even by matters

of external interest. On a few occasions it is so arrested,—as where he records in one place, from sympathy with the feelings of an ancient and pastoral people, the beautiful description of the discovery of pasture-grounds : —“ And they went to the entrance of Gedor, even unto the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. And they found fat pasture and good, and the land was wide and quiet and peaceable, for the ancient children of Ham had dwelt there of old.” And then follows a rapid glance at the violent seizure of this beautiful prize by others,—which little story contains the essence of all the old history of man, repeated in various and perhaps grander forms, but always much the same thing. With the exception, I repeat, of something of this external nature, the little story of Jabez stands alone, rescued and handed down with living interest through ages of tradition. Why? It is a little story here; but in life it was a long and great story. The history of all this wilderness of men had shrunk down to their bare names; but this account of Jabez asserts its eminence in the record. The fragrance of the memory of the just floated down through all those ages, and still to-day is fragrant to us.

“ Fame is a river,” says Lord Bacon, “ on which all light and worthless objects float down, while the heavier sink to the bottom.” This is not true, but there is much truth in it. The fact rather is that when the life of any one becomes singularly marked for good or evil, *that*

*lives!* But seeing the chances of utter forgetfulness to which merit of any sort, and however high, is exposed, it is a striking delusion of noble and generous hearts when they would seek remembrance and honor anywhere but in the memory of God, and in the works of mercy and justice. Yet, though the holy and the lofty may be forgotten, it is not less one of the duties of men to keep alive the record of all noble people, to the adorning of history, and to the instructing and enlightening of men. Much spiritual power is lost out of the world when we allow good examples to perish, "no man regarding them."

Now this story of Jabez was at one time an eminent one, known widely. But, however numerous were the details which are omitted and lost, the *weight* of the life is preserved, even in this most condensed form. And that cannot be said of many lives. Try this condensation upon your own life: leave out all particulars, and tell your own career in one sentence; and do you think the thing stated will be dignified and weighty? That you lived,—that you were moved by the usual passions and aims of the race,—and that you died,—if that be the short narrative of your life, as it would be of most, you can see that, however pleasant or splendid may have been all its events and adornings,—you can see how poor a thing it is when stripped to its bare anatomy. This is the touchstone which exposes and disgraces the superb characters of time, and makes the darlings of the world abjects to God.

But this old Hebrew Jabez stands well this test, as we are now to see. The narration is beautifully inartificial. It begins at the end: it begins with the character and position that this man had attained,—“Jabez was more honorable than his brethren,”—and then goes back even to his birth to account for this. “And his mother called his name Jabez,” (or The Sorrowful, as the word means), “because,” said she, “I bare him with sorrow.” This is a sad beginning. But the next thing is that “Jabez called on the God of Israel.” That looks better. This child of sorrow was a caller upon God,—the God who is the Father of His afflicted ones,—who commands the day-spring upon the night,—who blesses those who weep now and says that they shall laugh. And Jabez called on the God of Israel,—not, observe, upon the Deity, as some would prefer to say,—the vague, general God,—but upon a God ascertained, covenanted, and peculiar. Any prayer is good and of good issue; but the prayer to Him who has made Himself certainly known to our fathers as the one who hears and redresses,—as calling upon Him who is *doubtless* our Father,—that is the prayer that “availeth much”; and that was the prayer of Jabez. “And Jabez called upon the God of Israel.” Now hear the prayer,—a prayer thought so good in itself, and one so memorable in its results, that it has survived through all these centuries: “Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me!”

We will suppose that this was in part a prayer for temporal good, as I dare say it was; yet the whole spirit of it is beautifully devout: it is full of belief in the power of God,—keenly alive and real, as a petition to a living heart which heard. And though in part perhaps it was the natural cry of a being named “the sorrowful,” and whose lot was sorrow, for relief and comfort in his days, yet it was blended with the most touching wishes for the better good,—“and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.”

In this part of the prayer you can discover the spirit of the whole. For he does not ask to be kept from evil because of its consequences, but because it wounded him to do that bitter thing, and to sin against God. It sounds like a sigh of injured sensibility,—“and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me.” It hurts me to the heart to sin against Thee,—let me not sin against Thee! Such was the prayer. “And God granted him that which he requested,” (for prayers of this tone are never refused,)—God gave to him according to his heart, and fulfilled all his counsel. Thence it came, in the words with which the little narrative commences, that “Jabez was more honorable than his brethren.”

There are some things here obviously worthy of note. A life begun under very sad auspices was strangely changed and brightened! There was something specially dark at the birth of this child, or this mother would not

deliberately have fastened on him the name of "Sorrow." It was a time perhaps of particular disaster to herself,—of peculiar suffering or poverty,—or the death or estrangement of the one whom nature gives the woman for support under her great trial,—or perhaps there was defect, and so disappointment, in the child itself ;—some of these things wrung the heart of the Hebrew mother, or she would not have named her babe Jabez, the child of sorrow. But the boy growing up under this shade was not imbittered by it, but he turned, as I suppose instinctively, to God, and breathed in all his feelings every day the spirit of his prayer.

For you must not suppose this prayer to be any one distinct petition of Jabez. It is intended to express that such was the tone and style of the heart of the man,—that he habitually looked upward in that way,—that the words here set down were a sort of picturesque summary of his character. Sorrow intoned him, I suppose, to this fine spirit,—and then God was ready to bless him. He humbled himself, in the days of his darkness, under the mighty hand of God, and so God exalted him in due season, and made him more honorable than his brethren. Under the government of God we have no explanation of evil, but that it is an intended discipline of good. And here is a case where the instrument fully accomplished the thing whereto God sent it. A rare case, alas!—rare, at least, in the fulness of the good made to issue out of the ill. Sorrow, when it does not work evil, often accom-

plishes some good; but tell me, you who have suffered, whether you do not feel that the most it should have done it has not done. How large a possibility did it open before you!—how wide and fair a land of purity and peace!—but you have entered and possessed it only on its borders. Change all this. Make full proof of the merits of affliction. Is any man afflicted or disappointed? “let him pray,”—let his life be prayer. I mean a fine spirit of trust Godward. Let your heart daily be such that if you could coin it into language it would be just this: “Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!”

Observe, further, how fine a memento to the honorable and prospered man was his name, “the sorrowful.” It is a wholesome thing that in our pride we should remember our humble days and be modest,—that in ease we should remember pain, and in happiness sorrow, that we may be grateful, and that, as the discipline of affliction has raised us, prosperity may not befool us and cast us down. To carry with us, as if stamped upon us, the name and recollection of sorrow, will insinuate a tenderness through the hardening heart, infuse humbleness into its exaltation; and thus twice will affliction save us,—first directly, and then through its recollection.

It must have been a curious thing to the mother of this man, if she lived until the time of his prosperity, to think of that name, and to recall the feelings with which she

had given it. If it were done in gloomy distrust of God, how fine the reproach, as if God said to her, "See now! See now!" And she might answer: "Ah! if I could have trusted Thee but a little!—but till the morrow! Now how dim and dream-like all these past sorrows are!—much like the momentary passing of clouds when the sun reappears." So it is with us all when the day of God's love becomes clear. We are astonished at ourselves, and we have good reason to be. We are little beings, and have no faith in our hearts. If the divine hand is withdrawn for a moment from ours, we have not within us the love, the honor, to trust the divine love and honor, but become overwhelmed, if not hateful and sullen! And if, like this woman, we had through our lives named all these times of our distrust and despondency with some gloomy name, and if these could stand around us, as Jabez stood before his mother, as living monuments of our narrowness and infatuation, yet tomorrow we should be narrow and infatuated still, and say: "The Lord hath surely shut up his compassions,—the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious."

Oh that we could settle it in our hearts that there is one true and permanent thing,—the mercy of God,—the pity and love of our forgiving Saviour,—and that all griefs are fugitive and the shapes of a dream,—that there is one blue, everlasting firmament above and around us, filled with the pure peace and splendor of God, and that dark days and mists and storms with lightning may fill our



lower air for a moment, but that heaven, with all its stars, is steady above us still ! Then lift we up our heads, and not go sinning and sorrowing all our days, but, being joyful and grateful and sure of the Lord our Saviour, refuse to distrust, to sin, or dishonor Him in any way. So, though I am called Jabez to-day,—the one full of grief,—to-morrow I am sure I shall be “more honorable than all my brethren.”

Hear once more the beautiful words :—“ And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying: Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me ! And God granted him that which he requested.”

## MARY.

Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.—MATT. i., 16.

How small a space does Mary hold in the New Testament!—how vast a space in the history of the Church! Indeed, so vast that for hundreds of—I might say for a thousand—years she is easily the head and mistress of the whole religion.

As to her character, all that I can find about her in any way significant is a few slight details,—in the Temple and at Cana. In both we notice, I think, (as was to be expected through custom and daily life,) a slight sinking of her sense of the supernatural character of “that Holy Thing” born of her. At Cana we notice more than this. Wanting wine, she delicately intimates, “They have no wine.” This is met by His rebuke, to which, however, she is silent, only saying unto the servants: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” I find in her conduct here entire submission, a sort of gentleness, of meekness mingling with a trust in His relenting love. It certainly means, “I know him, and though he rebukes, he will do it; so be ready.”

Observe the silence. Shakespeare, the highest among all who have conceived the human heart or portrayed human life, is marked above all others, as the New Tes-

tament is, by the use of significant silence in representing character,—led by his deep instinct to know that whatever is peculiarly fine or high can only in this way be hinted to the apprehension. The highest traits of his highest women especially, and in their highest moments, are indicated—how? Just by a few words, a few touches, coming in between silences of far deeper tone, and so the exquisite outline of those wonderful characters is made out.

I find the same in the New Testament. Nothing in it is, to me, so deep and bottomless in meaning and effect as the silences of Christ,—a stroke or two, a few lines, giving figure and expression to the formless deep lying below. And the same as to Mary. How few the touches!—only just enough to mark out and give character to the deeps of silence, as, when you hear a strain of music at night, the stillness which follows it is made richer still and more musical than any possibility of sound.

The evangelists, having given us certain facts as to Mary, do afterward almost nothing but remain quiet, and not interfere with the inferences of the Christian heart as to the beautiful nature and wonderful consciousness of the virgin mother. The same method is followed in the very few particulars of her life given to us. Here, for example, He rebukes her eager wish, though delicately expressed. Then nothing is said as to her feelings—(silence),—but we understand, from a general

sense of her character, how meek and submissive that silence is. We feel at once that it is the same person who, when the announcement of the great wonder and glory was first made to her, simply submitted herself: "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

In things which are above her thought, and which seem to men impossible, in things which bring glory to her or in things which bring shame, the characteristic of this woman is deep, meek, silent submission; and this, as it is the natural top or perfection of true womanhood, so also is it of true Christianity. What she was, her Son was also in his wider and grander relations to God.

That this was the feeling which pervaded her silence at Cana is also denoted by this, that when she did speak, it was simply to say to the servants: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." In this little speech, also, is indicated what I have called her faith in His relenting love. It seems to reveal a trait in Him known to her, namely, denial only in order to a proper assent, the Son doing just as the Father is wont to do in the government of the world. But, apart from this, her very trust and hope naturally arose, I think, from her deep submission to His will.

The selection of Mary as the one "highly favored," and the terms in which she is spoken of in sacred Scripture, lift her, as near as possible, to an ideal character;

yet in this scene at Cana see how natural and simple and thoroughly human she is,—an ideal person, yet strongly contrasted with any current ideal of the world. She asks the first miracle, and for what? Not to convert, as the religious world would expect; not to amaze or exalt; but simply to meet a household want,—a want of that sort which would be keenly felt by any woman. Her friends, I presume, were poor, and she wished their feelings spared. “They have no wine,” she whispered to Him. She wished also to sustain the joy and dignity of the marriage festival.

Now I do not know that this was altogether perfect, and certainly it does not seem very grand, as the world defines grandeur; no, nor very religious, as the church often views religion; there is in it nothing of what is called saintly. But at least it was simple and natural, and came out of good and sweet and human feelings, and to my mind it was quite befitting the mother of Him who in his healthy humanity came “eating and drinking,” who had sympathy with the hunger of a hungry multitude, as well as with all the innocent feelings of friendship and domestic life. Though it had an ordinary look at first, it is worth observing that it was to a woman’s suggestion we owe the fact of the first exercise of His power,—a fact of vast importance in the history of the church.

But, though this act of hers has an every-day look on the surface, like most good things it is better and more

sacred than it seems. To bring the great into the little, to put the highest into the most unpretending shape, is one of the peculiar marks of Christ and Christianity, and just this is, from woman's nature and woman's situation, her special office and career. She is appointed to be the most Christian of the Christians in this respect. It is the woman's lot to make the least and commonest details high by her use and dealing. Her grandeur is in doing the great things of the heart in the small and petty concerns of the house and of every day ; her divineness is in sacrifice, but always in obscure things. And therein in both her destiny and her spirit she approaches, or can approach, nearer the peculiarity of Christ than that sex whose sphere is more public and large, and whose spirit is less meek and tender.

As if, then, to make this prominent in Mary's case, the ideal woman, who is first seen in grandeur, "hailed" by an angel, elected to be the mother of Christ, and giving birth to the hope of the world while a heavenly host descends and fills the sky and the night with songs,—we find that to her all this grandeur was but a lustre in the distance, and that this great fact was to her brought down into the sensible reality of poverty, of a mother's travail among strangers,—the manger, the stable,—that is, the greatest and most joyful thing was hidden under seemingly the meanest, certainly the most sorrowful.

And so all through her life. It is, we find, through poverty and the ordinary hardness and wear of the world

that she brings up this boy ; the heavenliness which announced him being so long faded out of the sky that she almost thinks it a dream. She brings him up on her bosom and at her knee, cheered, to be sure, by the opening beauty of the heavenly flower, but oppressed by all daily cares, perhaps by many doubts and wonders. So she worked out even this most divine part,—namely, the motherhood of the Lord ; she worked it out in the homeliest shape of common human life. She lived what all now regard as the highest life of womanhood, down in Nazareth, in the ordinary duties of a household mother, the condition of a peasant and a mother being a good enough sphere for the heart which was in her.

Observe what I may call the inwardness of Mary's character. On several occasions, when a common nature would have exulted, when vanity would have babbled, or when common wonder and doubt would have gone asking for explanations, it is said of her, "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

Now this would not have been repeated as it is, if it had not been a peculiarity and observable. This I call inwardness. There was a hush of awe about it, a disposition to keep a sacred thing sacred ; to hide the depths of the heart away from common talk, and to keep their inexpressibleness hidden to God ; to keep all doubts and demurs submissively for his solution ; to "judge nothing before the time" ; to draw inward, and compose and hush the entire nature at the footstool of God ; in short,

her whole heart seems to have been expressed in the one sentence, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word."

Besides these peculiarities we see, wherever we catch the least glimpse of Mary, that she is just the natural woman and mother, not distinguishable, however meek, yet anxious and disturbed,—like most women, like most mothers. When she goes down with the crowd from Jerusalem and misses the boy of twelve years, she seeks him sorrowfully, and when she finds him at last in the temple her harassed heart breaks into reproach : "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" And she exhibits a mother's usual restless interest when she is discovered following him in the ministry, and seeking to see and speak with him. "Thy mother and thy brethren," the crowd say, "stand without, desiring to speak with thee." And she does but exhibit the natural mother's depth of heart in that glimpse we get of her in the last scene, when the eyes of the Divine Sufferer, wandering from the cross, look down on an earth covered only with enemies, and up to a heaven which seems to reject him,—cast out of both,—then, at the foot of the cross, he sees her, and we see her, the mother, the one that never forsakes, the one whose heart first received him into the world, and the one who took into her own inexpressible soul the last sigh, the last agony, "the sword piercing through her own soul also."

These were the common characteristics of that divinest



earthly thing, a mother! Here, then, is Mary, in what was common and in what was peculiar. We see, even from the few hints left to us, that her character was just such,—just so natural and meek as was fit, and as we might suppose God would have elected to be the virgin mother of the Lamb of God.

But now we see also this important fact, that though she is introduced in the gospels in a relation of such tender and mysterious dignity to Him who is the “desire of all hearts,” and though the circumstances which open the scene give a sort of heavenly pomp to the lowly maiden, yet we see, I say, that the New Testament permits but one flash of those celestial colors which surround her, and at once the lustre is made to vanish, and she is left to us as just what she was in herself,—of such stuff as womanhood always is, though, to be sure, here seen in its best and most touching form.

In this modest position the narrative always keeps her; she is rarely mentioned, and then with no overweening interest, which is certainly wonderful, considering the beautiful greeting with which she comes in: “Hail! thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women!” This subordination of the Virgin in the narrative is marked. The Lord rebukes her in one place as advancing beyond her true position: “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” On two occasions he puts her as if on a common level with all mankind. The first of these instances is, where

an admiring woman in the crowd, speaking out the common feeling which exalts the earthly connections of a great person, said : "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked,"—that is, blessed is that person naturally nearest to such a sacred thing as thou art. He answered, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." And the second, where his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. He says : "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" Not such as mere flesh and blood unite, but they "which hear the word of God, and do it,"—such as are relations of the spirit, who have the common flow of the better blood within their veins, the kinship of souls, a common descent from the "Jerusalem which is above, and which is the mother of us all."

Here then is the character and Scripture position of Mary, kept in these pages as in amber. It is as if a sound in the air of Judea had risen and sunk, but its soft echo had been prolonged forever ; as if a beautiful image, once cast into the stream of a river, had passed down in it clear and distinct forever.

Now my first inquiry is : How did it happen that this simple, natural woman, to whom the Scriptures assign so interesting but so subordinate a place, came into the false exaltation in the Christian church in which we find her from so early a period, in great part, until now? It is very easy to say, "error,"—"superstition,"—"priest-

craft,"—"human depravity," etc. But I think its rise was in this way. One thing which impressed the ruder ages was the beautiful character of Mary. When once a knowledge of Christ had attuned the nations to new conceptions of excellence, to a sense of the beauty of those Christian and womanly virtues (for these are akin) which heathendom had always cast out, then they were prepared to feel the charm of that character. Again, the nearness to the mother of the Divine Son, as if they were of the same flesh and bone,—a nearness which an earthly imagination easily carries up into the whole nature. Add to these the dignity with which, as I have said, she is introduced upon the scene,—hailed by angels, overshadowed by Godhead, and declared the highly favored of Heaven. I think it probable that Mary presented the first instance in which female glory was distinctly seen by the world. These things together certainly gave hints to an idolatrous imagination; and its expression was the highest poetry of the time, and something more. The feeling was that uttered by Wordsworth:—

"Mother ! whose virgin bosom was uncrost  
With the least shade of thought to sin allied ;  
Woman ! above all women glorified ;  
Our tainted nature's solitary boast ;  
Purer than foam on central ocean tost,  
Brighter than eastern skies at daybreak strewn  
With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon  
Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast ;  
Thy image falls to earth."

Now, with so fine an object before them, so finely idealized, let us remember the polytheistic tendency of the human heart,—I mean the natural, almost inevitable bent of the heart to please itself with a variety of objects of worship, and to bring Godhead within its conceptions by dividing it into many, and so making each more individual and more human.

It would be far easier (to illustrate) in an early age to worship the host of heaven, the stars as a company, or as single, than to worship the whole unbroken concave of heaven. Accordingly, the worship of one infinite, unbroken God is too much for man, perhaps in any age; for we see plainly that, in the incarnation of the invisible Father in the man Christ Jesus, God means to assist man in the conception and worship of Himself. "No man hath seen God at any time;"—you cannot see unbroken light;—"the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

This desire for many or several gods is not only natural, but in the early ages of the Christian Church it was backed by the crudeness of the times, and by the customs and habits of all preceding periods. These people had the idolatry of all the past in their veins.

Now you can easily see how gladly and eagerly such an intense bent of the heart would turn itself to so beautiful and mysterious an object as the mother of the Son of God!

But, above all, consider the fitness of such an object

of worship to the weakness of the human heart. Mary is purely human ; the Son of God is not. The heart wants mercy. Yes, you say, but is not Christ here, set forth as the transcendently merciful One ? To be sure, but he is also divine rectitude, and this checks the sense of his mercy ; while here is the compassionate woman, the woman's heart, which, however holy, is yet more motherly and pitiful than holy ; and so, how gladly will the weak bosom of sinful man lean itself against a compassion which, if not weak itself, at least is so human and tender that it forgets sin in sorrow !

You will see the force of this if you remember that, at the time of the origin of the worship of the Virgin, the Gospel, as forgiveness, began to be forgotten. The church system had gone back into a system of hard Jewish law and penalty, and Christ was not then the all-compassionate Saviour, but "the Judge standing before the door." How welcome then to laboring souls, to the sinful, to the merely weak,—yes, even to those who, knowing Christ as we know him, would gladly have embraced his knees,—how welcome to all these the thought of that one in the divine family who was a woman and a mother !

From these combined causes arose the idolatry of "Our Lady,"—"The Queen of Heaven,"—"The Health of the World,"—"The Mother of Mercies,"—"The Spouse of God,"—an idolatry which in its origin and afterward was, I dare to say it, often merciful, and, through

mercy, often purifying to the human heart,—an idolatry which divine Providence used to neutralize other errors,—an idolatry by which woman was made sacred,—by which the human spirit was softened and relieved,—by which, at some times, and to some degree, the Gospel, though in a far lower and weaker form, was rescued from oblivion for the needs of the suffering human heart.

Yet though error has its sides of benefit in the mercy of God,—though error, like affliction, in spite of its deformity, “wears yet a precious jewel in its head,”—yet, sooner or later, its issues must be to degradation and penalty. And this error, which has in it some things venial, some things beautiful, and which bore some golden fruit, has yet been, and now is, in the church, a source second to no other in corruption, in emasculation, in idolatrous degradation. The good that once went with it,—the natural grasp it took on the heart,—the tenacity with which it holds it even now in despite, in defiance of the pages of the New Testament and of its results on the human spirit,—are a terrible proof of the fatal fruitfulness of even the most natural error.

It has become the fashion with many of the higher class of modern writers, because they are sensible of Protestant excess in this matter,—because they have discovered some historical necessity or some historical fitness and beauty in the worship of the Virgin,—to pass quite to the other side, and to think that whatever they can explain is justified,—whatever is shown to be natural

is shown to be defensible,—and to see no evil where they have found some good. Such are always the foolish reactions of the human mind. How often do wise and charitable men of genius, laboring to get at the true historical point of view,—I mean the view under which a conviction or belief actually arose,—when they reach it, and see how conceivable and natural a thing it is, conclude, that because an error is not devilish, and is not inconceivable, but simply human, it is excusable.

But, in fact, though an error may seem excusable from its naturalness, and from the good which has been mingled with it, yet it is that element of good, and of nature, which has given it the power to stand, and which, in the long result, makes it more fatal than if the face of a devil had been worshipped, and not the face of the pure, and simple, and compassionate Virgin.

Perhaps the greatest spring of vitality and power in the Roman Catholic Church has always been the worship of the Virgin. Whatever adulterations it has brought into religion, it has at least made it vital ; just as all false religions derive their power from adapting the object of worship to the human heart. It is evident, therefore, that the true religion can never be as powerful, human nature being as it is, as a false or adulterated religion, because a perfectly holy object cannot be as gladly approached by the weak and unholy heart as an object not quite so high and holy. We want a God somewhat

weak, or, if he expresses our highest conceptions, he must have at least, not an obvious and tangible, but an indefinable side of weakness toward us; just as, to illustrate, the bad or erring son always seeks to come back to the mother and not to the father. The mother may be the better person of the two, yet to the child, though she had, in general, the rectitude of God, she could not refuse an endless compassion. I never heard of even the best mother ever refusing the worst son,—and never have I heard of her demanding, even after seventy times seven offences, a very accurate repentance. If he needs, if he is in misery, and if he comes to her, that is all; she will never, never cast him out. That is a mother! and if you will make such a mother Queen of Heaven, the hearts of weak and sinful creatures will, of course, turn to her before all.

So we observe, and must confess, that this worship of a divine woman is, to the mass, a worship warmer and closer than the worship of God; for it is the worship of mere compassion by a world which suffers, but has not a heart for holiness. Deluded souls! So far as compassion is really merciful to you,—so far as it does not tend to give license to wickedness by dropping all the demands to righteousness,—is it not enough for you that you have him “who washed us in his own blood,” and who leaves nothing even to be imagined as to true compassion? Yet, whether it is that our theology brings too much forward the claims of holiness on the heart of man,



and keeps too much back the offers of tenderness, or destroys these offers by strange and hard conditions, I know not, but it becomes us to inquire when such an amazing fact as Mary-worship stands before us as if to force us to inquiry. Certainly the attractiveness of Christ has not been felt as it ought, and the words are yet unfulfilled, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." How is this? Why "drawn" to this mere mortal, a woman, through whole ages of Christianity? and why drawn anywhere else? and why not drawn to him, the express image of God, and the brightness of his glory?—to him, the very Lamb of God, sacrificed for us? I repeat, because, first, of the corrupt wish for a mercy which allows sin,—that is the great cause,—but also because, second, he has not been "lifted up." The church has not revealed him either to herself, or to others. If we see him be sure we shall run after him. Our teaching, I say, must be wrong. We must, in some way, weaken that incomparable charm which is in him,—we must in some way limit and defeat the all-penetrating mercy and love; for, if it be seen, its property is to overcome.

It was not so much to exhibit this miserable idolatry of a creature that I have been speaking, as to show what it reveals of the heart,—what the heart wants,—these hearts of ours, which, if they do not bow down to the Virgin, bow down to a thousand things, and which will usually make their religion, if they are still religious, out of some false idea of a weak divine mercy.

IN view of all this, I would point you to the true mercy, and the true Christ, who meets all real wants ; and I will tell you, in all simplicity and freedom, what I think he is,—how that unspeakable heart feels, as nearly as my low thought can reach him.

When we remember our youth and its waywardness,—when we remember our maturer and more deliberate and more deep faults toward some being who has been to us only goodness and love,—we will say it is a mother ; we will say it is a mother now dead,—when we remember that her forgiveness was always ready, that she asked no terms, that when we were troubled or needed pity that was quite enough for her,—when we ask ourselves would she have forgiven, would she have loved after the worst and deepest wrong, and when the whole world cried out, “Away with him,” we answer that we *know* she would, and that she would have come nearer to us when every creature and every spirit put us eternally away ! We know there is such a love, and we know also—mark !—that it is a love which has no fellowship with our sins, but which, while it loves most and forgives most, is most grieved and violated and wronged by our degradation. We know that when she received us back to her bosom, however often she did it, there was nothing in that to lead us to indulge in new faults, for the depth of her grief, uniting with the tenderness of her compassion, lifted the strongest and highest barrier in our soul against transgression ;—yes, and though we surmounted

even this barrier, and did violence to her sacred wishes, yet the tie of her purity and love and grief ever held us, and tugged at our selfish hearts, and drew, and drew, and has not let go, and will never let go.

My friends, in that mother's soul, whether it be of Mary, or of any other mother, Christ is not substituted, but suggested. It is the divine image of Christ; in it he is lifted up,—the supreme, yet pure compassion.

Talk not to me, then, with fine discriminations of the sorts of repentance, of fitness and preparations to be reconciled to God. Wherever there is a prodigal who would return, there is the open bosom of the Saviour. At the side of his mercy, the mercy of Mary, the tenderness of all women's, all mothers' hearts, is shallow and foolish.

And if this divine Saviour's heart, while it loves and receives beyond all mothers, has that about it, also, which reproaches our wrongs far more gently, yet with deeper touch, than can the sanctity of any mortal, then here in Christ is the natural home of the prodigal and outcast world,—a home which at once saves us from our sorrow and from our sin, and encircles our lost spirits at once in his forgiveness and purity. Here is he in comparison with whom the pure and merciful Virgin, and all tender and sacred mothers, and all kind and holy men, are but as the first drops of the shower when the whole heaven is filled with abundance of rain; "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

## JOHN THE BAPTIST.

John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.—MATT. xi., 18, 19.

THE finest historical painter cannot conceive a contrast of characters more striking than that of John and our Lord. The remarkable and broad relief which one of these characters gives to the other was meant, no doubt, for a purpose. John was as the dark, stern background in the picture, which was to set forth the cheerful and altogether human life of Jesus Christ. You come from the one to the other, as from a narrow and dark but sublime mountain defile you emerge into the broad, rich plain, with the magnificent and endless heavens stretched out above.

Besides this, had John the Baptist been such a being as the John who leaned on Jesus' bosom and who bore the very image of his Master, his testimony to Christ had been much weakened. Did you ever reflect how powerful was the witness which the Baptist gave to the Messiah on the very account of his deep unlikeness to him,—the wide gulf which dis severed them? Here was a man entirely uncongenial to Jesus in spirit, with his personal views of religion and life so opposite, acknowl-

edging as most divine the Being with whom he was personally most out of sympathy. Whoever knows any thing of human nature, of its blindness to forms of religious excellence not its own, especially where there is the highest religious enthusiasm, must admit that the worship which such a soul as that of the Baptist gave to such a being as Jesus, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," is the most profound testimony in the power of a human heart to offer. It was the intention of Providence that John should bear witness of the Christ, and it was so contrived, chiefly through this extraordinary diversity of their characters, that this witness should be of surprising force.

The differences in their characters were meant to conciliate the two great classes into which men are always divided,—namely, those who cannot receive religion unless it be not only unworldly but even stoical and ascetic in its form, and those who can only accept it in its truer and more genial spirit as something entirely in sympathy with all that is innocent in man or fair and good in the world about him.

John was born as if unnaturally of aged parents. We read nothing of kindly family nurture, and it would almost seem that he was thrust forth friendless and alone. "He was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." When he came up to the abodes of men, "he had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins." His was indeed hardly an actual life;

he was rather "a voice crying in the wilderness." If all that was severe and venerable in a life thus sternly immolated to God could carry awe and a sense of religion into the human soul, here it was provided. On the other hand, the child Jesus, born of Mary, rested from the first in the sacred bosom of a human mother, embraced and fostered by her heart. He had his natural boyhood and youth, in natural ways, sweetly yielding to all human ties, and "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." When he walked among men it was as a brother, willing to make his first appearance in life at a marriage feast, and to leave at the very start that impression of himself, eating of the food of the publican and sinner, and not rejecting the outcast who wet his feet with her tears. If, then, an image of a perfect man, of an exquisite humanity, of universal sympathy, of a life untainted by any fanaticism, uncramped with any narrowness, blending together all goodness and all wisdom,—if this could bear the charm of true pity into the heart, here in Jesus it was provided.

"John came neither eating nor drinking. The Son of man came both eating and drinking." In the one or the other style, then, the world must be satisfied; for the testimony of both is united upon the Gospel, and so hearts disposed to view religion in very different aspects are conciliated. That one section of the world to whom duty and hardness are naturally the face which religion wears may accept Christianity through the John who came out

of the wilderness, while all other men who love religion in its more natural and gracious form may be surely won to it through Jesus Christ. On the one hand or on the other, the world must be satisfied. But the world was not satisfied. The abstaining John had a devil; the Son of man who did not abstain was gluttonous and a wine-bibber.

There are several things taught here. We shall at present consider only what God has taught us in the fact that he sent John neither eating nor drinking, but the Son of man both eating and drinking. We see here God's willingness to adapt himself to man. This principle in the proceedings of the Divine Father toward his weak and ignorant creatures, we see everywhere, and it is always affecting. I regard the whole universe as a contrivance by which the gracious Being who made us lets into the narrow aperture of the human soul some knowledge of truth, of goodness, of himself. The Bible is a great specimen of the same. Unwearied is the patience, endless are the variety and skill, with which in this Book he labors to adapt the truth to man. One part of this adaptation is in the allowance of various forms of the same essential goodness; and yet on the whole leaving it clear which is the more excellent way. There are Elijah and David, there are Paul and John; and above all there are the Baptist and Christ. The spirit of each of these is adapted to different classes of persons, and it is allowable for each man to catch that aspect of this varied

goodness which is most congenial to his own mind, and which will most arouse its powers. While this is the case, the perfect standard of Christ the Lord is lifted high above the heads of all. But God thus allows men not only to form themselves according to different styles of character, but he allows also a great range and variety in the way of life.

In nature the same God is distinguished by this very thing,—the diversity in reaching the same ends. In aiming at the few great ends of beauty and utility, or in exhibiting his good and wise character through his works,—in doing just these things he allows almost an infinite variety in the way of doing them. He allows every thing he creates to maintain inviolate its own individuality, to live out some character or some ways peculiar to itself.

No two flowers are precisely alike in odor or in form. The great trees of the forest differ widely from the violet and the rose, and to each of these, as well as in respect of his whole creation, he has allowed its separate mode of life going along with its separate nature. Yet through all and by all he reaches his ends.

It is so with man, and the thought is not unimportant. One comes eating and drinking, and the other not, but both render honor to God, and fulfil their course. That is, in plain words, wherever there is a heart genuinely marked with the divine image,—no matter how greatly or widely the life of such a person differs from others,—



let us not lightly judge him. As he came originally from the hand of the Maker, fashioned with a deep inward distinctness from all other souls, so the life he lives, if it be true and genuine, must exhibit the same distinctness or individuality.

Here is a man whose soul in its own way is genuinely impressed with the truth. That I cannot deny. But then he has but little perception of the aspect of the truth which impresses me most. Some of the qualities I hold in most honor he does not exhibit. I may have a great deal of force with roughness; he is gentle, and I think wanting in energy. I have deep remorse for sin, and powerful struggles. He hardly knows what I mean when I talk of such things, for the love of God and the attractiveness of Christ or the honorableness of duty or some lovely impulse draws him along. Now shall I and he judge each other? God forbid! So he grow heavenward and live, let him grow as the secret Fashioner of life directs, not as I would. Let him eat or drink as his own inward divine Instructor leads, only this being sure, that he is "thoroughly convinced in his own mind." But, some may ask, is there no standard of character and living? Surely there is. The Bible is that standard,—especially the character of Christ, and where the essentials of Christian living are not violated, the utmost freedom is allowed to shape one's course in conformity with one's original nature, and as that holy yet free spirit which Christ gives shall teach and prompt. I know

assuredly that it is a very difficult question, and at this day especially agitates both nations and churches,—how far each being should be controlled from without, and how far left to the responsibility of self-direction.

But one thing is sure,—that no outward authority, whether of the Bible or of the Church, if it be divine, will oppose or diminish or crush the growth of each man's character according to the outline or model which nature has pre-established, and in which he must grow if he grow at all.

No enlightened man at this day will deny that. But to recognize all this practically,—there is the difficulty. We daily sit in judgment on each other,—one denomination of Christian men erecting themselves into a court for the condemnation of the universe without, and worse still, one individual man trying by his own petty standard all other conceivable souls, and stretching or lopping all dimensions to suit his own tyrannical model.

This was much more common formerly, but there is enough of it now. Remember, therefore, that if you would have your brother grow in God's grace, while you hold out to him in yourself the light of Christ's character, force him not to grow into the image of the truth after your model, or after any model but his own. Respect the peculiarity of the man. So, as to yourself, allow not the opinions or forms of men to interfere with your feelings and thoughts, where they are clearly against the sacred interests of your spiritual life, remembering that

God requires his plants to grow, but requires not the birch to grow as the ash or the fir-tree as the box.

John's peculiarities were designed for a special purpose. But so also in a very different degree, of course, are the peculiarities of every man who has any real character of his own,—they are in every case meant by his Creator to fit him for some peculiar purpose. Each man in the same sense as John has a peculiar purpose in the world, for which the rudiments of his character were given ; and though undoubtedly he is bound when these peculiarities run into any thing vicious or excessive to curtail and modify them,—yet, I repeat, he must on the other hand so far respect his own native constitution as to let all the excellence into which he grows take of the original shape of his nature.

What would Paul have done, if there had been in his day a public opinion which demanded of him the same or any thing near the same religious experience as John's? Or suppose John had been required to carry through the world the thunder of Paul. Yet this, or something very like this, has been done in the Christian world,—a certain conception of Christian character has been made of such exclusive authority that the Christian growth of masses of men has been thwarted, stunted, and if not entirely put back, they have forced themselves into shapes so unnatural as to make their whole appearance false and their whole life without power.

Apply this in the simplest manner each one to himself.

You have felt at times that certain virtues appeared lovely to you, or that in certain views your ordinary life appeared unreasonable or unsatisfactory, and that you could make some motion toward some good, but others have told you, and you have come to think yourself, that religion is something very different from this, and so you obeyed not the good which showed its face before your own heart. Such tendencies come and go and you pay them but little attention. Now, however different this internal experience may appear from your idea of religion, know you not that this is the very portal of vital goodness to you? Know you not that this very gate, unlike as it may seem to that through which others go, is to you the open entrance to God and eternal life? Think it not a slight thing, therefore, that you trifle with what is good to you; life and death are in it; all the authority of religion is to you concentrated in this one thing at this point where your own character admits the light from heaven.

Whatever, therefore, others may say, here is your religion in the good thing you can feel or do; here is the beginning, I mean, of your spiritual birth, through which you will gradually emerge into a wider and wider horizon of life,—through which in due time you will grow up into Him who is the Head. Take any other course and you will forever wait, as most people do, and find nothing. Or if, under the pressure of some influence, you do commence the religious life, what is it but the attempt to

force on yourself views and feelings which after all will not be forced, and which will make your whole life a self-deception, or leave it under a gloomy sense of constant barrenness? What is the meaning of all this, but that you are attempting to do, not as the invisible Spirit teaches you to do, but according to the style of other people? Depend upon it there is a capital fault here, which lies at the root of Christian life and withers it.

I have thus vindicated the sacred right of each man to have his own character in religion, as in all things else, against the growing tyranny which presses all shape and life out of souls in the aim to reduce all to the uniformity of some public ideal.

But while, in the interest of humanity, I protest against all this, I must not allow you to forget that there is a faultless Ideal to which all—each in his own way, however—are bound as far as in them lies to approach. I mean the character of Christ. Nor is this inconsistent. As we are all born with that which is peculiar, we are also born with that which is common, and the perfection of our common humanity is set forth in the model of the Son of man. From all quarters of the circumference are we bound, then, to draw near this centre.

“ He is a path if any be misled ;  
He is a robe if any naked be ;  
If any chance to hunger he is bread ;  
If any be a bondman he is free ;  
If any be but weak, how strong is he !  
To dead men life he is, to sick men health,  
To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth,—  
A pleasure without loss, a treasure without stealth.”

We must all reflect this ineffable image of the Son of God, but each man according to his own order. How beautifully may one and the same image be varied when seen through a thousand glasses! It is the same in all,—the same, and yet how different!

Whatever may be the style in which you live your religion before men, you must be sure of this, that the malicious or weak will put an ingeniously bad construction upon it. If you lean to the severity of John, you will be thought a sort of devil; if you be more nearly perfect, and copy close the open, generous, cheerful life of the Lord of all, you will be thought of no great piety,—your course too pleasant altogether for a religious man,—a gluttonous person, a wine-bibber! Independence, then,—manly Christian disregard of a childish public,—is what our Master here teaches us. Know your own character; choose your own way of leading a sincere Christian life; and then, not haughtily, but with calm indifference, pass through the censures of the world, committing yourself and your way to God, the righteous Judge, who at the last shall “bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”

## THE GREATNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord.—LUKE i., 15.

GREATNESS is a vital subject to speak of. For if we except the sins of sense, all sins, all spiritual wickedness, lie in a passion for greatness—that is, an exalted self. Pride and conceit—what are they? The feeling that we are great. Vanity? ambition? The desire to seem great or to be great. Malice? The poison poured out by hatred on whatever obstructs our importance. Spiritual sin, I say, consists in the undue exaltation of self. But God has taught us that there is a greatness which is noble, and the most passionate desire for it innocent. He wills no deadening of the soul, but that it may go with all its force to the right greatness. In this chapter he sets before the eye one form of it,—points his finger to John and says, “This man is great.”

The first thing we see as to John is that his greatness is not outside of him. Not in fine clothes. “Those clothed in soft raiment are in kings’ palaces.” His raiment was a piece of common camel’s skin. His greatness was not in houses and lands. His dwelling was the wilderness. And as to faring sumptuously, “his meat was locusts and wild honey.” You cannot name one point in which the greatness of John is

the same as the ordinary greatness of life and history. I say "ordinary," for history has in fact two classes of men revered as great,—those accidentally and outwardly so, the mere minions of success, and another class who really have some elements of greatness. Among these are the great men of mind and will, of whom I suppose Napoleon is the highest specimen. But quite above these are the men whose souls have been full of awe,—not distinctly for God, not perhaps for duty, but for something not self, for some high, sacred thing, to which self bowed down, in which self was lost; call it country, honor, truth, call it even beauty; men who practically worshipped some noble thing and gave themselves mightily to it.

The historical record of man has not a few of these. Men have not gone blind altogether: a reality of true greatness, let theologians say what they will, is found among earth's precious names. And it is in fact due to truth and in the interests of mankind to recognize a fundamental likeness between such and the more favored children of God. Hence I say that though the greatness of John is something entirely unlike all the ordinary greatness of the earth, yet there is a class of persons,—namely, the men, whoever they are, in whatever strange garb they are clothed, who may be heathen in every thing but one, the sacrifice of self to something felt to be higher,—these are by that central fact, whatever the differences may be, essentially one in greatness with John.

For what was the greatness of John? It was at the



heart of it this very thing,—awe for the highest, such awe as sacrificed to the highest his whole self. The voice of God called this young soul to the wilderness. The voice called him back to the face of men, to meet the sins of a whole people, and he came up from the desert, unenslaved to man or society; as an animal out of the forest; a voice crying, “Repent.” He came rebuking the aristocracy, “O generation of vipers”; rebuking the King, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife”; crying aloud, “Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.” But was this all? If so, John was not alone in this. Noble spirits have denied themselves and faced man, before and since. In every clime I see such, whose path is marked with blood. But here there are higher things, for all this was just nothing to another conquest.

Self-sacrifice, especially if it takes the form of asceticism, usually obtains victory at one point at the cost of defeat in all other points. That mighty selfness in us, if denied as to the senses, will assert itself as to the spirit; will secretly push itself out in pride, for example, or in a thousand forms of spiritual luxury, and so secretly make up for its losses.

But the wonder respecting John is that self-sacrifice with him was a real and thorough yielding of his whole self to God without subtraction. Where other men stop, there he began a far deeper sacrifice,—the sacrifice of every vanity, of every aspiration. Mighty with the

people, a favorite of Herod's, he put it all under foot. Yet even that could be done. You must test him at a still deeper point. Great spirits identify themselves with a great cause; they feel their might, the sense of a noble self-augmentation; and just here, if anywhere, in a sort of superhuman pride, will be the point of failure. Just here you will touch the weakness of the high and stern ascetic, of the mighty revolutionist. And God touched John just here, and found him as simple and humble as a child. High as he rose before the Jews, he never faltered in lowering himself, and pointing to the One who was higher: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I."

In the midst of the excitement and the awe of hosts of the people pressing to his baptism, pressing toward him, the high figure of the whole Jewish land, as he stood in the Jordan there came an unknown young man to be baptized of him. "But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" And afterward when a high and solemn commission sought him out and asked, "Art thou the Christ?" "he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ." Nay, far beyond this: "What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not,"—nothing so high as that. Nay, beyond this also: "Who art thou then?" "I am a voice,"—no more; as if he had no self,—“I am no person,—a mere herald's trumpet of the coming Lord!" Go even still further: It was the sight of John toward the last, and under a sense of failure, that God saw when he said, "He shall be great."

Where the will is developed to such enormous proportions, and where vast success has marked the early stages of a man's work, then frustration and disappointment destroy, if any thing can destroy, the tone of the spirit. I do not speak of personal disappointment; John was prepared for that: "He must increase, but I must decrease." I speak of the failure of his cause, for that was the one thing dear to his soul. Disappointment here was death. Yet John's views were disappointed on every hand. He came to overthrow—and he did. But see the resurgence of the black wave of corruption,—see the incestuous Herod on his throne, and John dying in a dungeon. Yet even that perhaps could have been borne, and the hero still have found in some part of his heart a drop of patience.

There was, however, as I interpret it, a heavier disappointment *as to the Christ!* He expected might, and he found feebleness. "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor." "I bring water, He fire." He found nothing of all this. Hence that singular, sad message sent from his prison: "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" Left to languish nearly a year in a prison, hearing little of any advances of Christ, what he did hear not according to his idea of him, he began to distrust,—*"Art thou he? It does n't look so."* Distrust—shall I say it? an awful suspicion of mistake—shook the very foundations of his heart. But it was not to end thus, noble servant of God!

Just before his violent death, when earth and even heaven seemed to fail him, from a distance he sent the question to Christ, trusting that this new person was as honest and noble as himself. I see those messengers return and enter the fortress. I have tried to follow them through, to picture the looks, the thoughts of John the Baptist as he hears the answer: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." And as his ear followed that noble list of truly divine works, did not the scales fall from his eyes? and when the last significant words were heard: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," I am sure (for God would not desert the sacred servant) that that peace of the soul which is unoffended with its divine Master entered and fixed his heart. Fit then it was—the hour had come—that the greatest watchman on the walls should depart, that he who had appointed the stern sentinel his place should license him to leave it; and the dancing girl who asked the head of John the Baptist in a charger was but the miserable instrument by which God called back the soul of his servant to himself.

"He shall be great." I see what God meant. Great he was,—the divine ascetic who as a strong wind of justice swept the land,—great in humbleness and generosity, but greatest of all in this, that when the one idea in

which his being was lost seemed broken like a glass,—when justice was in prison,—when the kingdom did not come,—when the resplendent king who should sit upon the holy hill proved to be, to all appearance, a quiet teacher with a few quiet followers,—when, instead of the tree of life, which should expand and bloom at once, and fill earth and heaven with its beauty, nothing could be seen but a simple seed thrust under the clods,—at this moment he submitted, he stood steady, he said: “I know not. God seems to be all wrong, to be less in earnest than his poor servant,—yet, though all give way, and though God does not stand by me, I will stand by Him for ever and ever!”

This was the greatness of John. “He fulfilled his course.” What he was born to do, he did, what he could not control, he submitted to, though it contradicted all his ideas; and in short, he presented that rarest thing known in human greatness, a transcendent personality, a transcendent might, in union with humility, self-surrender, and patience.

To be a servant of God, to fulfil his will at all cost, to take up the weight of all disaster, even the failure of the kingdom of heaven itself, and bear it,—this is our rank and title of honor. Look steadily into the emptiness and meanness of the most of that which is called great, what is it at its core? Seekest thou such great things for thyself? “Seek the Lord, and his strength; seek his face forevermore.” Our souls’ greatness is all in know-

ing God, in walking faithfully and humbly before him, and in making our whole lives an arena where in small things and large we do the will of our Master, and with our whole souls trust in him forevermore, and finish his work,—

“ Filling from morn to night the heroic scene  
With deeds of hope and everlasting praise.”

## NICODEMUS.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, etc.—JOHN iii., 1-12.

THOUGH the narrator does not enter into the particulars of this interesting interview, we can be at no loss to understand the main facts of it.

Jesus had for the first time visited Jerusalem in a public character. Rumor no doubt had spoken of him there as a great prophet or a great wonder-worker, who had appeared in Galilee ; and now, when he had come up to the Passover, he was observed with much interest. There were obvious reasons why the higher classes—the Pharisees particularly—should regard him with suspicion ; for, instead of coming to Jerusalem to open his ministry, he had done that in the inferior region of despised Galilee ; and now, when he was in the sacred city, it was obvious that he did not belong to them. In dress, demeanor, and language he appeared to be alien to them ; and instead of seeking the countenance of that haughty class, he kept himself aloof.

In the judgment of all sects he who is not with them is against them. How early the Pharisees seem to have formed this prejudice ! They were waiting for a Messiah,—not, to be sure, so anxiously as the people,

but still with interest ; and as to Jesus, it is probable that at this period they knew nothing substantial against his claims. Still instinctively, as it would seem, the first look of the matter was distasteful to them.

There was one of them, however, who saw that in this Stranger from which he could not so easily turn. This was Nicodemus, "a man of the Pharisees," but not entirely a Pharisee,—a man in whom the open heart was not quite lost in the prejudices of sect. He was "a ruler of the Jews,"—a member, that is, of the Sanhedrim.

Nicodemus, therefore, was of elevated rank,—one of the princes of the people. His position and his credit were no doubt dear to him ; they were not to be lightly risked. To preserve caste as a ruler and as a Pharisee, he was hemmed in to a very strict demeanor ; for there can be no greater slavery than that of a man who occupies at once an official position and a place of rank in a religious party.

Therefore Nicodemus came to Jesus by night,—that is, no doubt, secretly, and perhaps at the dead of night. Where he found Jesus at that hour, and how employed, we know not ; but he found him ready to do the work of his ministry,—instant out of season as well as in. Though Nicodemus came by stealth into the presence of one who he knew in his heart could dishonor no one, and though the secrecy of his action came perhaps from weakness, if not from selfish carefulness, yet Jesus receives him and does not upbraid him. Mixed motives are so treated usually by the wise and good.



Nicodemus "came to Jésus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." This introductory address, and the respectful title, "Rabbi" (a title which acknowledged that a man was not only a competent but an authorized teacher),—this form of address is an expression of ingenuous and decided belief in Christ, at least as a teacher.

Accordingly our Lord begins at once his teaching: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

That Jesus should begin his reply in this way has seemed to many abrupt and unconnected with the address of Nicodemus; but it is because they have not observed that by that address Nicodemus had, as it were, placed himself at the feet of Christ, to hear what he had to announce. It does not seem to me remarkable that Christ should have begun without delay his message; but it is well worth while to remark what it is that he chooses first to say. "Thou art a divine teacher," said Nicodemus,—"that is, I am here to be taught." Jesus answered: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. That is my message; at least that is the great base and beginning of the doctrine that I came to teach." With solemn emphasis—"verily, verily"—he thus places the fact of the new birth at the threshold.

We usually regard these words merely as an abstract statement of the doctrine that man must be spiritually regenerated ; but we should keep in mind to whom, and when, they were spoken.

Hitherto Christ had not taught any thing of this sort. To the people generally, and indeed to his disciples, he had, up to this time, set forth the most beautiful Gospel morality, and had commanded implicit faith in him, but hardly any thing more. He kept back the spiritual depths of his religion. Here, however, he had an auditor who, by his office, should be able to understand something of these hidden things, and who, by the ingenuous confession of his belief in Christ, gave promise that he could in some measure appreciate them.

But Nicodemus knew nothing of his meaning. Though trained in the perfect manner of the law, and though, from the good heart which he had, we may suppose that he, if any of the higher people, could imagine something of Christ's intent, yet he knew nothing of it. "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

It would not be possible to show in any better way than this how entirely formal, external, unspiritual the Jewish people of all orders had become. Here was one of the choicest of the people, who seemed as gross in his religious conceptions as the most ignorant of the Jewish peasants.

To think of such a being as Christ having arisen from

the bosom of such a people!—of such intellectual and spiritual conditions, or rather limitations. To think, too, what a task was laid upon him,—in the midst of the bitterest deadliest prejudices of a nation that was besotted with ignorance and foolish notions, to teach and to implant the divine Christian faith!

But Jesus never turns from any stupidity or any wickedness that is willing to hear. At once he explains his mystery, adding: “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?” This expression sounds to me not only as an apology to Nicodemus for not entering more deeply into truth, but it is prompted, I think, by a feeling of discouragement. For it was his intent, it appears from this, to speak of “heavenly things,” and he thought he had found the right ear; but no,—the auditor was not fit for the subject.

What things—what unspeakable things were they, which were ready, but kept back for the want of a hearer! He left unspoken his “heavenly things.” And not only then, but always, he found not a world which would or could hear, and so (and for no other reason) he could not and did not speak. There was in his heart a reserve as to truth,—a sensitive unwillingness to degrade it; and he had this trait in so peculiar a degree that he was forced to silence or to the simplest teachings in parables. True, this Gospel of John, unlike the other Gospels, records many of his words which the world did not hear,

but which still he gave them, in the hope that they might hear. But even in this Gospel, and to his chosen disciples, he was forced to say, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"; while to the Jews at large his reserve was singularly great. He shrank with a wise dignity from speaking of the heavenly things to gross and uncongenial hearts. And I can in no other way account for that expression,—one of the severest he ever used,—“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.”

Though Nicodemus was found so far below what a “master in Israel” ought to be, and could believe but little, he was yet, no doubt, of a towardly and open, though timid heart; and though it does not appear that he publicly acknowledged Jesus, yet there is reason to believe that on several occasions he used his influence in the Sanhedrim in his behalf, and kept back somewhat, perhaps, or meliorated for a time, the proceedings against him. Nicodemus became, it is probable, a disciple, though his strength was not equal to abandonment of every thing for Christ’s sake.

How far such weakness is consistent with sincerity it does not become us to decide too boldly. There are peculiar characters, peculiar situations, to which a general rule is not applicable. There may, no doubt, be a genuine and deep root of faith and love in the heart, which yet may fail, not merely in one instance, but for years, to act itself out consistently and boldly. True piety *ought* to

make every man ready even for martyrdom, if need be; yet who will say that there is no grace or goodness in hearts which might not be equal to this? Nicodemus was a style of man that is not uncommon. He sought to make duty consistent with public honor and esteem; and for doing this, in his case as in others, there were, no doubt, many plausible and some just arguments.

While, therefore, it may not become us to judge such harshly, the lesson which his character affords should not be lost. How many men live below—ay, far below—their convictions as to what is good, pressed down by some shameful fear! “I would openly serve God, but I am afraid of the opinion of some; I shall be criticised too closely; or I am afraid of some loss as to property. I cannot acquire it so freely or hold it so firmly. I would—I feel I ought to do my duty to my fellow-men in a better way,—to be more generous, more noble to them,—but prudence of some sort holds me back.”

If it is mere prudence that holds us back, let me say that it is an unworthy prudence. We have all our place in some Sanhedrim,—that is, our post, our honor, our point of interest or solicitude; and *that* it is which brings us *at night* to the Saviour, if we come at all; that it is which, while we say in our hearts, “Rabbi, we believe that thou art a teacher come from God,” yet forbids us to give up ourselves boldly to him. Constantly hampered, we do our duty cravenly and partially, live thus through the world, and when we leave it at last, the

awful question is started by those behind us, whether indeed we knew any thing of God. At best, perhaps, we leave the charitable to hope that such might be the case.

Let us now consider the great truth which our Lord has here taught,—that there is a new birth, and that the experience of it is absolutely essential. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The idea of a second birth, as it is a natural figure to express any great change, is not unknown in the East. The Sanscrit name of Brahmin signifies “the twice-born”; and the Jews regarded the entrance of a proselyte into their religion as a second birth. The meaning of our Lord, however, is something far deeper than any external or even moral change. As to what he really did mean there has been and is much controversy.

The new birth is the beginning of a new affection in the heart by the power of the Divine Spirit. I suppose that this new and gracious affection of the soul is built upon and rises out of the usual moral sentiments of the man, just in the same manner as these moral sentiments (if you trace the process of their formation) rise out of or are formed upon what is yet lower in him. But, on the other hand, the element which appears is strictly new,—just as much so as the new compound of the chemist is entirely different from the elements out of which it is compounded; and not only is it strictly new, but strictly born in us of the Divine Spirit. The same,

indeed, may be said of any other good sentiment or characteristic which a man acquires, in the general sense that "every good gift cometh down from the Father," but it is true of this in a high and pre-eminent sense.

As for the manner of it: ask not for the manner. In no one thing can you tell me *how* a thing is done: you can only tell me at each stage that *it is done*. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Spiritual processes we know nothing of; but then we know just as little of material. We see *results*.

If I am a spirit, and if there be a Master-Spirit from which I came, I know that he whose breath created me can breathe on, can expand and illuminate the soul that he has made. To be sure, he passes by me and I see him not; yet I feel his presence, and when he has gone on, the fruits he has scattered remain. When the field of grass or grain is blown upon by a gale, I see not the gale, and I know not the laws of the wind; but I feel the freshness, and I see the whole harvest bent as under a stream. That is all I know there, and that is all I know here. "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." There is a heavenly breath which "into souls doth creep like to a breeze from heaven." There is a vital heat which is like the clear sunlight upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

There is a light which lodges within us as the light shines through the diamond, which purges the darkness and goes down even to the inmost seat of mental sight. There is, in short, a mighty word: "Behold, I make all things new." This speaks, and it is done; this commands, and it stands fast.

This new power may exist in all degrees of strength, even from a point where the signs of life are scarcely perceptible, up to the most vigorous fulness. But while we allow that the new birth of the Spirit may be so small, let us not for a moment remove or blot out the line which separates it from the ordinary condition of the soul. The smallest beginnings of faith and love elevate the man into a region as much above that of mere morality as though he had ascended from earth up to heaven. No mind can value, no tongue can tell, the worth of that divine seed sown in the heart. It is a seed of light sown in the midst of darkness, a seed of life sown in the midst of barrenness and death; and from its blessed germination a new creation of spiritual and magnificent reality shall spring forth,—a new heaven and a new earth.

This is happily stated in the words of an illustrious man. He is speaking of the dignity of this spiritual element in the heart, which he calls charity, or love. "The infinite distance," says he, "that there is between body and intellect does but imperfectly represent to us the distance between intellect and charity, which last,



being altogether supernatural, may be said to be infinitely more spiritual." According to this there is a *carnal* greatness, an *intellectual*, and a *spiritual*, each rising in splendid pre-eminence over the other, and each opening a new world, as if totally unknown to the world below it.

We have seen, then, first as to the origin of it, that this new element, though developed under laws and regulated by them, is still entirely supernatural,—that is, is a new and higher life than belongs to human nature outside of the Gospel,—and in the next place that, though it may exist in great weakness, it has intrinsically a divine value, and without it a man cannot see the kingdom of God. The birth of this new gleam of emotion, which begins in whatever weakness and smallness, is *regeneration*, and the element is regal. I mean that there is that in its nature which at once or gradually rules and dominates the whole soul.

The conclusion is, then, that the first and great thing which we should seek of God is this new soul. A man may be accomplished in all the high and honorable things of nature; he may even believe Christianity, and may say with Nicodemus, "I know that thou art a teacher come from God," and sit at his feet and hear of his doctrines, and yet live in blindness and say, "How can these things be?" A man may have all wisdom, all knowledge, and yet see nothing. He may be ready to give his body to be burned, and yet be nothing, if there be not in his heart somewhat of this gift of divine love

and light. The heavens above his head are brass, and the earth beneath his feet is iron. The greatest thing that can be said of a man is that he is an immortal spirit; but a still diviner soul may be acquired, a soul through which we may cast off sin and all lowness,—through which we may behold and have fellowship with God in his Son, and with all holy realities,—through which, nay, *in* which, we have the heritage of eternal and blessed life.

But how? How can we acquire this? “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” It cometh not with observation,—Lo here! or, lo there!—the kingdom of heaven is within you. This unspeakable gift is bestowed freely, fully, always to prayer. Pray that the evil heart be removed, and that a new heart be formed in you. Seek it! Ye shall find it. Knock for it, and *some* door will be opened into it. It is divinely given, then, to seeking. But not this only. Though given divinely, it is formed as if naturally. We ascend always and in all things from the ground where we stood before. From sensation I rise to intelligence; from intelligence and sensation I ascend to moral emotions; and from these, well used, the Spirit of God forms in me that divine affection which is a new soul, and which is as unspeakably above all morality as man is above the dust of the earth out of which he was formed.

Great as the change is, boundless as are the results of it, the birth of it will arise as simply and naturally as a

plant in your garden when you have placed the seed there. Indeed the germ of it is in that seeking. That sincere wish and search of your heart is itself the seed. But suppose you have no disposition to seek. Then if you hear the truth and feel no inclination upward in your soul, you are so far hopelessly below life. You are as much unfit for God as some half-formed animal. But no man lives who is that—or he is not a man. Begin with the natural light which lights every man; yield to it as it points to all duty and all hope. The reward of duty will be the receiving of a better soul, pledged by the word of Christ, called forth by the divine energy, and making you new-born to all the heavenly things which now you see not.

And there is as deep reality in the fact to-day as there was on that night in Judea when Nicodemus heard the voice of the Son of God declaring in profound solemnity, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

## SIMON PETER.

And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona : thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone.—  
JOHN i., 42.

THIS is the first meeting of the Lord with his great apostle, and this the “All hail!” with which he greets him. He penetrated at once the main peculiarity of Peter’s character, and said, “Thou shalt be called a stone.” He saw in him a rough, frank hardihood, a devotion and boldness which could take responsibilities, and great faith.

These qualities made Peter naturally eminent among the apostles from the first. Everywhere he was the head and representative of his brethren, always speaking out what he thought, earnestly and plainly, sometimes presumptuously and irreverently. Whatever faults he had in his heart, there was that which atoned for all faults,—a sense of what is high, and unhesitating loyalty to it,—a standing quality like the rock. He was a Galilean. Now Galilee was a rude region, despised at the metropolis; but it is usually the case in the history of national character, that the very remoteness and obscurity of a district best preserve its antique type. Here in Galilee was the best of the old Jewish life which yet remained, the

purest of the ancient traditions and feelings of the Jews. So that the fisherman Simon, bred to labor upon the remote Sea of Galilee, was yet, by the very distance and rudeness of his place and people, and by the way of his own life, kept pure in the simplicity and in the best spirit of the old religion. He was ignorant, to be sure, and narrow, for he was a plain rude man ; yet the great primitive insights of the old prophets were in him uncorrupted, and he had a basis of religious convictions, which, though of an altogether Jewish type, were genuine.

Thus we find that at the very first miracle which was wrought before him—the great draught of fishes—there is no mincing or reluctance in the convictions of Peter. He says, “Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” He beholds at once the majesty of Christ ; and, what is better still, the power of Christ introduces him at once to the holiness of Christ, and that reveals at once to Simon’s heart how unholy and unworthy Simon is. Since he had such a nature we are not surprised to find the general openness of his heart to his Master, the affectionate loyalty ; and gradually, as he saw and listened, and new lights entered, we are not surprised that it was he who, in spite of his Judaism, first distinctly recognized who the Lord was. When the most advanced even of the apostles had gone no further than to admit that this Jesus was a prophet, or was “that prophet,” he saw Him, and saw Him through his own heart.

We think we all see alike, but the heart is a peculiar sort of glass: it may be so white and noble itself that it sees clearly white and noble things, or it may be so mean and murky that the Apollo looks to it like a satyr. "But whom say ye that I am?" There was no answer till one sprang forward and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." By one noble act of heart-prompted reverence and faith Peter broke through into the great secret which no eye had yet seen. "Thou art the Christ." Here begins the noble eminence of Peter. He, standing highest, first saw the ascending Sun and the morning spread upon the mountains, and his voice first proclaimed, "This is He!" And if we remember, too, that this was at the great crisis when all men were deserting the Christ,—that Peter then, when the mean always grow meaner, the cowards more cowardly, stood forth to acknowledge and announce him, we see that this Simon the son of Jona, of a rude Galilean speech, a mere fisherman, was in spiritual life at that moment the foremost man of the world; and we see the same thing in another speech of his made at about the same period. "From that time," says St. John, "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." There was a general forsaking of him. "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" (or, "Surely ye are not also bent on leaving me?") Then Simon Peter answered him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

It was on the ground of this noble confession, which implied so much, that Christ pronounced upon him that most memorable blessing: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven";—blessed art thou who hast discovered what no signs in the heavens or on the earth, what no wisdom, no height of natural gift, can show to man. Therefore unto thee, who hast declared to me who I am, I shall declare who thou art,—  
"I say unto thee, That thou art Peter,"—thou art the stone,—  
"and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

These are remarkable words, and have acted like a dreadful fate in the world. To this moment they seem a puzzle to many people. The mightiest church in the history of Christianity—that church that is called Catholic and Roman, and might be called Petrine (the church of Peter)—is built on the belief that these words gave to Peter, strictly and personally to him and to his successors, the spiritual throne of the world.

Now this, it seems to me, is too puerile for much discussion. A church built on a text susceptible of various interpretations! The obvious meaning is this: that the spirit of all daring, mighty, rock-like faith, which

prompted Peter's words, was to be the base of the Church ; that he, as coming first in that spirit, was the first stone of the Church ; that this fact gave a deserved prestige to him, which, however, was conditional upon his continuance and eminence in that spirit ; and that he should rise or fall, take the first place or the third place or no place, just as he showed the superiority or the inferiority of his faith.

Accordingly we find that this Peter, here made the rock and king of the Church, is addressed in another place as Satan himself : "Get thee behind me, Satan ; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." So we see that it was not Peter simply and absolutely who seemed so exalted and illustrious to the eyes of his Master, but it was the Peter who was in that spirit, and while he continued in that spirit, and just in proportion as he kept himself up to that great moment of its power when the blessing was first pronounced. In other words, it was an honor placed upon him, both exalted and personal, but conditional. Thou, Peter, being such a one, and all like thee, are the foundation-stones of my church. He who, when rising high in that spirit, was a prince and king of the Church, when sinking down from that was regarded as nothing and nobody. Look at the narrative. After his glorious confession, he is set forth again and again in such a light as seems almost an open satire on him and his claims or any such claims for him. He, *the rock*, who will never deny the Master



"though all men should,"—he denies him, we find, with every circumstance of a pitiful cowardice, and thrice before the crowing of the morning cock! He, the rock, ran off, we find, with all the rest,—“forsook him and fled!” He, of such divine insight as to hold the keys and open and shut the gates of heaven to immortal spirits,—he misconceives at every turn the truth of his Master as to the simplest things, and is at the best but a blunderer to the last.

From this glance at the history of Peter we learn this one great lesson among many others,—namely, that there is one fact as to all human spirits lying the deepest, and to every such spirit more important than any other fact whatever. It is this: that each soul stands high, has its rank of light, of dignity, and of power, from the clearness with which it sees that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God,”—that is, the clearness with which it sees, loves, obeys the Highest. The test of every creature is its ability to see, to find out, the best, and to be loyal to that with the whole soul. The question asked of those simple Galilean men is the one question asked of all:—“Whom say ye that I am?” Just as you can answer that, is revealed all that is in you, all your value. Words are easy,—to say creeds,—yes, and to make them, —“I believe this and that; I believe,”—but no man can say with depth, “I believe and am sure that thou art the Christ, the Highest,” unless from the highest spirit speaking in his own soul. So also as to all other highest

things, mark this: the heart which most quickly sees, loves, gives itself up to the noblest, though it looks mean and disguised to the common eye, has the blessing of heaven,—“Blessed art thou!”

We are most of us worshippers of some counterfeit; but be assured the height of our God settles it how high we are. The Church of the future is before us; who shall be its foundation-stones? Not certainly the men who deny the sublime trusts of the heart,—who will venture nothing on the strength of the divine instincts,—certainly not these, but those who can discern the heavenly, call it by what name you will, who can abandon all to it, who can say, “I believe and am sure,”—these are the rocks of the world, and on these rocks the Church of the living God shall always be built, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The old miracles can be acted again. What was Peter but an organ for the wind of the Spirit? No more. His colossal name is inscribed to-day upon the most magnificent temple which stands built upon the earth, and written in great letters of gold round the lofty dome we read, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”

Yes, and you, simple soul in the common ways of life, rising above your cares and errors and distrusters, and in single-hearted, full reliance resting all upon God, daring to believe the things no eye can see, which flesh and blood cannot reveal,—you also are a rock and foundation, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against you.

## ZACCHEUS.

This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.—LUKE xix., 9.

THESE words are the conclusion of the story of Zaccheus the publican. There are some things in this story which it will always be useful to notice. "And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich." You know something of the publican, what he was. Well, Zaccheus was the chief of these, and by his nefarious business had amassed wealth. He was then in that most odious of all conditions,—a man wealthy through wickedness, his fortunes built on crime, and worse still, built directly on the miseries of his fellow-creatures. He belonged to a class of men not at all confined to the ranks of the publicans, and not now entirely extinct,—nay, much increased in the world, and, to the lasting disgrace of humanity, atoning for meanness and crime by success, and covering almost any fault of their lives with their gold.

The manner in which Zaccheus was called was this. As Jesus was about to enter the city of Jericho, compassed by a dense throng of the populace, Zaccheus, out of mere curiosity, it would seem, "sought to see Jesus,

who he was, and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way." The picture is as vivid as if the thing had occurred this morning. "And when Jesus came to the place he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house."

I date from this moment the beginning of the change in the heart of this chief publican,—a change due to the condescension and goodness of the act by which a prophet, in the face of the keen prejudices of the people, so honored one of the despised class of publicans. This sent a flash into the heart of Zaccheus; so, in an agitation of surprise and gladness, he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. No grudging or surliness on the one hand,—“I can’t afford it”; and no false humility on the other,—“I am too base for such company.” The Lord had called, and so he felt he must needs make haste joyfully.

The same Lord, in a thousand ways, has passed by each human spirit, has fixed his eye upon us, and named us as distinctly as he called “Zaccheus.” He has bidden us “make haste.” Years and faculties already wasted, and death not far off, have repeated the monition, “make haste, and come down,”—come down from the position of vain curiosity, or of thoughtless thronging about him in our churches; regard him and his eternal Gospel no

longer as an idle spectacle for our Sundays, but "come down" really to receive him to our homes and our bosoms.

When the multitude saw it they murmured and said, "He has gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." The plaudits of the crowd for Jesus changed at once, you see, to murmurs. In this loss of favor with the people observe another instance of that constant sacrifice of himself which Jesus made in behalf of the cast-away. His reputation was built up at this moment by his great works, but he remorselessly casts it down, because truth and mercy shall not yield to prejudice, even against the cruel and mean publican. So Jesus accompanied him to his house. Then this follows: "And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

By what process he reached this state of feeling is not set down. What passed at the house to deepen and fix his convictions is not recorded. But the mere presence of the Holy One was, of course, to the open heart like a breath, an influence, from above. Not a word is said of Jesus' preaching to Zaccheus. But to be alone with Jesus Christ in one's own house indicates enough. The publican starts up from this divine contact a renovated creature. He was a hardened creature, and he had met nothing but hardness; but when he looked at Jesus

Christ and saw the holiness, the mercy, the beauty, the personal pity, his soul was melted and recast; he was turned at the divine touch from common earth into gold.

Now there are several things I wish to notice in this repentance of Zaccheus. First, its difficulty. It seems to be a miraculous power which can turn *any* human heart from earth to heaven; but here was a special case of difficulty. That he was rich, that he was a publican, that he was the chief of the publicans, seem to set forth an ideal case of unfitness for religion. Merely as rich,—“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” But a publican and chief! It is necessary to describe that, to get a full impression of the difficulty of the repentance of Zaccheus.

To be a successful publican meant, not merely wealth, but avarice; not merely avarice, but greedy and remorseless avarice, through which the Jew's heart became as stone. It meant more. It meant power (for these publicans were official people, you know), and it meant the insolence of authority over the wretched. The publican, paying a certain sum, bought of the Romans the power to get as much tax out of the Jew as he could grind out, so he ground and ground most remorselessly. So they necessarily saw nothing of human nature in others but the deception and baseness of victims who would escape in any way the red jaws of the wolf; and they felt very little of human nature in themselves, but a relentless barbarity in wringing out the blood from the

hearts of the poor. Hatred and war then toward the poor,—hatred and war toward all the world! For they felt themselves, no matter how rich they were, as men looked at with the bitterest contempt and hate, underlings to the Romans, renegades to their nation.

Now, to be below all around us socially and in personal character, and to be above those around us officially, is just the acme of popular odium. Thus, in fact, the publican of the time of Christ was an ideal case of unfitness for religion. Supposing that Zaccheus was even of the better class of this bad brood, we can see the difficulty of his repentance, almost the impossibility of it. But the better man beneath, though buried under a mass of obstructions, awoke. The pure Lord was tender to him, and so drew the spirit up and out, even though millions of acres were heaped upon it, though dark mountains divided between it and a noble life. It is just the old Gospel tale over again. The Lord said, "I must abide at thy house," and it was done. To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.

This is that secret, that peculiar miracle on which Christianity itself is built,—namely, the unlimited power of pity, especially where it is shown, by a Being pure and lofty, toward those who are consciously degraded. All the world—you and I—are not reclaimed to God, because we do not know and believe the love and pity which God hath toward us.

The next thing I notice in this repentance is its appro-

priateness. I feel a special genuineness in it, because of its appropriateness. Zaccheus reversed the action of the engine. Where he was most gone wrong there he turned fully round. "The half of my goods I give to the poor." His life of gain he turns at once into a life of gift, a world of greed into a world of generosity. Nay, "and if I have done any wrong to any man I am ready to make restitution." The bitterest injustice and all its habits he reverses at once into the noblest and most generous honor,—“fourfold.” I like this. A repentance of mere feeling, given for a life of sin, is not admirable. It is not admirable for a man to reform everywhere but at the right point, and leave untouched the cherished vice. It is not admirable, either, for one who begins the higher life to change a thousand things which are perhaps trivial, or merely external, and allow the master-current to run deep and silent below.

Next, I like this repentance because of its heartiness: it seems clearly to be a heart revolution. A man whose soul had slowly grown to be a thing of sordid nature—where the graft of avarice had become part of the tree, and the life of the root and stock had passed into the graft,—where, as a rich man said the other day, "My money is my life,"—where, to repeat, money was ingrained into the soul, so that to touch the treasure was to touch the *quick*,—that this being should be changed as in a moment is an incredible thing, as hard as "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,"—incredible if we did not see it done.



The new birth, then, an outbreak of new soul, a creature fresh born out of baseness and ugliness into a heavenly beauty, is a thing possible. I behold with awe this divine transmutation. Being loved, Zaccheus loved in return. No parade of sorrow, no talk of faith and repentance, but a whole heart bursting out. His first breath sweeps away, in noble, tender charity, half the gains of a sordid life. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." His next breath pledges all that remains in restitution to the wronged: "And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusations, I restore him fourfold." He made his own deep sense of the wrong he had done the measure by which he recompensed it,—not the cold rule of arithmetical justice. He would lavish back justice. Here is the fair, large, living fruit of a touched and transmuted heart. Here is the singular, the supernatural power of love as a force. It is strongly marked, to be sure, in Zaccheus, whose nature I suppose was originally noble, and responsive to God, but it is possible, I believe, in every thing called human.

And now, last of all, see how such a penitence is accepted by Him who knew the heart. And Jesus said unto him, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch" (turning to Zaccheus) "as he also is a son of Abraham." This man is of the lineage of right responsive hearts; when the divine calls to him he hears. "This day is salvation come to him."

Behold the freedom, the promptitude with which life, forgiveness, salvation, is given to the touched heart. Do not object,—do not demur and say, “Too sudden.” It is true a man may have many things to learn and to unlearn ; he has a great future to advance through. There is a threshold, and there are inner courts in the holy city of God, but he who is within the gates is within, and the morning light of the new sun shines upon him. To-day, then, if any one hears the kind voice, “Hasten and come down, for I must abide to-day in thy house,” no matter if we are very low down ; if we are of that which is lost, no matter, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”—if we are only glad and welcome him. Henceforth we belong to the living, not to the dead, and he will pronounce over us that magnificent benediction, “This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.”

## CAIAPHAS.

. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them : Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.—JOHN xi., 49, 50.

THE public enthusiasm for Christ, chiefly since the resurrection of Lazarus, drove the rulers to some decisive act against him ; and thus his mightiest miracle—giving life to another—precipitated his own death. The rulers, having met in the great council, candidly own the emergency and say to one another, “ If we let him alone, all men will believe in him : and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.” What decision then ? They wavered, it seems, either from scruples of conscience or fear as to a decisive step, until Caiaphas arose and said with something of scorn and imperative vehemence, “ Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”

He simply meant, of course : “ Why waver because of this man’s life ? If that stands in your way, know that it is expedient he should die for the public good. Let him die ! ” But this he expressed (unconsciously, no

doubt) in the sacrificial language quite natural to the high priest. So St. John says: "And this spake he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation." In other words, Caiaphas—not intending it, intending any thing but that—did state in language strangely appropriate the necessity of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. John's meaning is that this was not a chance coincidence, but divinely ordered, and it certainly looks so.

Consider this coincidence. The Jewish ritual was one vast system of lower sacrifice, meaning some higher sacrifice and foreshadowing it, as all lower forms of sacrifice are always symbols and foreshadow a higher. At the head of this grand system of prophetic symbol stood two objects,—the high priest and the pure lamb which on the great day of atonement he offered as for himself, so also for the sins of the people. This great priest and this pure lamb were the two figures which topped and crowned the whole Jewish system. When the Jewish nation saw the high priest on the great day of the year enter alone with the blood of this atoning lamb into the holy of holies, to present it before God for the sins of the people, all the mysteries of the Jews' ritual gathered into this one,—all else were but steps of ascent to this, which stood at the top and represented the whole. As this high priest stood for the whole host of priests, and for the office of priesthood itself, so also the blood of this lamb stood for all sacrifice and all lustration. Nay,

I may say that, as the sublime temple itself was but the tent under which this great scene was shown, so also the nation itself was created and sustained for the purpose (among others) of exhibiting this idea of man approaching God through aid,—through a medium, a mediator, and through sacrifice. And this is true, however various men's views may be of what mediation and sacrifice are. The Jews were a nation elected and preserved, and through thousands of years scourged or rewarded, destroyed or built up, just as they kept the position of a priestly and sacrificial people in the spirit of the original design,—a people sprinkled and purged with blood,—a people with a priest and a victim as their heraldry,—a people whose healthy state, whose true welfare, was not that of natural prosperity or natural safety, but of supernatural and perpetual deliverance or redemption,—that is, the rescued people, rescued through sacrifice, or, which is the same thing, by a mercy exerting itself through cost and pains and blood.

It is singular, by the way, how that idea is kept up through the Old and the New Testament,—that God's people are a people saved by the Lord, the whole history of the Hebrew race being a history of rescue. Moses, who led in the great rescue from Egypt, was himself a "rescued one," having his name from the fact. And just this is the whole description of the new spiritual race, the Christians. They also are the people saved, the people who have a Saviour. I have said it was,

throughout, a rescue through sacrifice,—from the Pass-over lamb on the fearful night of the exodus, down to Christ.

And now at the hour when the higher offering, the true Lamb, stood ready for the sacrifice, and just when the whole system of expiation, priesthood, temple, and sacrifice was to pass away as a mist, Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, declared that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and by his word did in effect order the victim to the altar of sacrifice.

I say this is a coincidence. Had there been at that council-table a stranger, some enlightened spectator who knew the office of the Jewish high priest, and now beheld that great dignitary come forth, ordering not that the usual lamb should be slain, but that “one man should die for the people,”—had this spectator known that as a matter of fact the Jewish system was just then to disappear,—that in place of its sacrifices, the loveliest, most innocent, and divine head was to perish upon a cross, and had he foreseen from that awful “lifting up” the pure influences which should descend and flow upon the world from this real and mighty offering made once for all for the sins of the people,—had all this flashed at that moment upon his eyes, this spectator, though he were the calmest of men,—had it been Socrates instead of John,—would have been moved by a shudder of awe and exclaimed, “This spake he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied.” It looked—did it

not?—as if now in the end of the old age, the high priest of the past, moved by a Power behind, which he knew not, deposed himself and introduced the new order, gave a command at the sound of which voices were heard as of departing gods, saying, "Let us go hence."

But not only a great coincidence is here ; there is also a great contrast in this plan of Caiaphas,—“ It is expedient,” etc.,—a contrast between the seeming good of this plan and its real evil.

It seemed an admirable plan. It would quiet the people, save the nation, and all at the cost of one man, and he a disturber. But *in fact* what was it? He proposed to effect a great good by a little wrong, as he thought it ; but the little wrong—as great wrongs usually seem to the transgressor—turned out to be the murder of the Son of God. The great good effected was what? Not only did it bar forever the regeneration of the degraded nation, but it did not avert or delay for one moment the destruction they dreaded ; for the Romans did come, as they had feared, and drove the ploughshare through the very foundations of the temple. Nay, not only this, but thenceforward the blood of Christ, that blood redeeming to others, stained *them* with death through these eighteen dreadful centuries of shame and cruelty and wrong.

So the shrewd and bold Caiaphas, so proud and so scornfully sure that he was right (“ Ye know nothing at all ”), was wrong after all, and never was any one so

wrong. Proud, over-confident, and unscrupulous people may take notice! And if he was sincere, as I suppose he was, those people also who plead a good conscience for bad acts may take notice! He, like most statesmen, and like most private people, did not know that it is infinitely more "expedient" to be just than to be unjust, and that every wrong, from the "bloody instructions which return to plague the inventor," down to every mean and cruel act, is never expedient,—good not even for the moment, but bad forever.

If any man excuses himself from any duty, slips away from any obligation of honor, puts by justice, violates another's right, because it is to his own interest or pleasure, because it is "expedient" for him, let him remember Caiaphas. And though he have some pretended good in view, to cover and sugar his wrong,—nay, though the good in view be not pretended but real, and though it be a *great* good,—“that the whole nation perish not,”—yet let him remember Caiaphas and that expedient council at Jerusalem. There is no older subterfuge of the Devil, and no newer one. Many of this generation seem to have forgotten all the law of Sinai and all the law of Christ, and to have saved only one great law, the law of “expediency,” which is often the law of the Devil. It is expedient that I be rich; it is expedient that I be President or Senator; it is expedient that I be fashionable,—then let the pearl of honor perish; I will tread upon my own heart if need be, but it is expedient. It



seems so, but you are eating "the grapes of Sodom and the apples of Gomorrah."

Besides this contrast to which I have called attention there is here another and a more peculiar one. The high priest's words were those of a Jew addressed to Jews. When he said, "that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not," he was felt to use sacrificial language, and vaguely to suggest that, as the life of ordinary sacrifices was freely taken for the benefit of the people, so also in a great national emergency might the life of a man. This was dimly suggested, I say, by the language, and pleased, no doubt, the imaginations of these Jews. In other words, there was a vague idea of a sacrifice for a good end, and that was all. But he did not notice that there are two sorts of sacrifices in the world and always will be,—the sacrifice of *you to me* and of *me to you*. This priest wanted a sacrifice to the public good, as he chose to call it; but it was not the sacrifice of himself or of one of his party to that end, but the sacrifice of another,—a sacrifice on the other side.

Now here is something of a difference,—indeed just the difference which divides as a gulf the whole human race,—the difference between that fiend self and the angel love. See! Here in Jerusalem stood the recognized high priest, saying, "Sacrifice another to us." Here in the same city, unknown, unrecognized, stood another High Priest, who said, "I lay down my life for

the people." *Taking* is the rule of the one; *giving* is the rule of the other. Behold two pictures, hung here by the hand of God. Here is the heart of heaven itself, offering itself in sorrow and blood, a sacrifice for man. Here is the spirit of the earth, in the shape of a high priest, willing and greedy that any thing, be it heaven itself, should perish to save him and his. "Look here, upon this picture and on this." I hope their meaning makes itself known to you.

What do you see through the whole history of states, their diplomacy, their wars, on each side? This: "It is expedient that you should die for me." What do you see in the conflicts of business and the rivalries of society? "It is expedient." From the child quarrelling for the best bit, or the best place by the fire, and getting its place by displacing another,—from this up through all acts and works, up through all the selfish and malign voraciousness of society, up until it reaches so far that the individual soul would see all things, heaven, earth, God himself, perish as a fit victim offered to its own prosperity,—this is the world's theory and practice of sacrifice. Behold it and abhor it! Expedient! Yes; always,—that I prosper and you perish. State necessity or the stress of personal necessity for my good or my glory justifies it, and has gone so far as to make its own rule,—namely, "Necessity knows no law." But what necessity? The necessity that I should live! But, by the eternal laws of God, there is no necessity that such as I

or you, Caiaphas, should live. The true necessity may be that we should die.

Here then is the master-spirit of this world. But in the world there is another spirit, thank God ! by the side of this ugliness and in contrast with it,—the spirit of patriots and lofty men, the spirit of tender women and mothers, a different heart, descended from above, which is able—nay, sometimes *longs*—to lay down itself for others.

When at last the Lord came, and went up to Jerusalem to die, and was “crowned,” and went out bearing his cross, and gave his life,—“the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” there were unveiled the full dimensions and glory of that other spirit, which is “the express image of God.” Its beauty is so inexpressible that I suppose, were it once discerned, even by the basest, it would touch the centre of the ruined heart.

We ought, before we die, to learn to admire the admirable, and not to spend our whole days in such a childish life of false admirations ; for we are good just as we admire correctly and strongly. Now there are, as I have said, two pictures before us to-day. Which do you really admire ? Do you admire that of a world which, however splendid outside, is, if really seen at the centre, deadly, and which always says in fact, “Let me sacrifice you” ? or do you admire and worship that other spirit which, though it may look ignominious (as ignominious as the cross of Christ once looked), is in reality nothing but

this, " I willingly offer myself for you ; here, take me " ? If God has in himself (let it be said with awe, but let it be said), at the centre even of his own nature, any thing *more* divine than all things else, it is just this and not any thing beyond it. And if we do not see it and feel it, as it shines here in the cross of Christ, or wherever it appears, we " know nothing at all " ; and if we are not aiming day by day to live a little in that spirit of Calvary, we are literally living to no truly human or divine purpose.

## PETER'S DENIAL.

And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.—LUKE xxii., 57.

I SPEAK this morning of Peter's denial of his Master. Few things can be found of more thrilling interest, and the remembrance of it can be traced through the traditions and superstitions of all Europe. It is still a tale worth speaking of, and will be forever.

It was on the night before the Crucifixion,—a night so dreary, so crowded with sorrow and heartbreak, that it might be called the night of the agony,—it was on that night, after the last sad supper, that Christ talked forebodingly to his friends and said, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." But Peter said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." The Lord calmly answered, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." But Peter, breaking out into vehemence, said, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." A few hours after the soldiers are at hand, Christ is betrayed and taken to the palace of the high priest, and there in an outer room Peter is heard denying that he ever knew this man,—“Woman, I know him not.” It was about, we will say, three hours since he

had made that other speech : " If I die with thee, I will not deny thee."

Now, if we take Peter's high sense of what Christ was,—the complete subjection of his soul to this extraordinary Master, and the sort of charm of wonder and love which seems to have been over him,—if we recall the last scenes, the melting words and acts of Christ, the washing of the disciples' feet, the farewell supper, where he hands to each of them as if a part of his body and his blood, where he appears with such depth, such height, and seems to unite—shall I say it?—a womanliness with a Godlikeness of heart (I know not how else to express it),—if we think of this, and then think how Peter and his fellows acted, they will seem no better than sots, and we shall be tempted to dismiss them at once. Yet we should mistake. They were ignorant and weak men, but still they had hearts; and though in their poorer moments, they as well as we could sink very low, yet they were men whose rough cheeks were wet with the tears of penitence, and who in time would do better.

But how shall we excuse Peter? I do not mean to excuse him, but I should like to set him down just as he is. He makes no defence himself. Neither in the Gospel of Mark, said to have been written at his dictation, nor in the early traditions, is there a word of defence, and so we should feel all the more careful that his fault be stated just as it was; and if I pause too long here, and pass into too much detail, it will be owing to my belief that it has not been stated exactly as it was.

It is usually charged that Peter was over-weeningly and boastfully self-confident, and it is true; but there was, I think, a mixture of natural mistake in the matter, which somewhat excuses him.

The facts are these, I suppose: Peter was a prompt and brave man, who truly loved his Master, but toward the last he was much disappointed at the turn things took, for he had still hoped, in spite of the spirituality and humility of Christ, that he was an actual king, who, though spiritual, would still reveal himself in some way visibly and powerfully. At least he still clung to some remnant of the Jewish expectation; but, though much disappointed now, he never dreamed of deserting his Master, and in substance it was a noble spirit which made him say: "I will never desert thee." But he mistook the part he had to play; he misapprehended the trial that was before him; he still thought his duty would come in the shape of enemies to be resisted. There was something in Christ's figurative sayings which seemed to Peter (prepossessed with such thoughts as he was) to countenance wrong ideas and expectations. For example, there were in the company, it seems, two swords, of which Peter bore one. This itself seems to betoken a false conception. And when Peter toward the last heard his Master ask for swords and say, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one"—(sell the clothes off his back for a sword)—he must have become doubly confirmed in the feeling that forcible

resistance was intended. So when the brave man was told, "You will deny me," he felt, "No; I will quail before no enemy of my Master." His imagination, I think, was solely engaged by the thought of an encounter and a struggle, and so far I believe his confidence in himself was just and noble. Though there were but two swords, though he was alone against a crowd, he said, "I will die before I give way." And I go further. I think he justified this self-confidence on the first opportunity, for as they "came upon Jesus with torches and weapons, Simon Peter having a sword drew it" (he was n't backward) "and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." I think that blow was the blow of a man, and was well intended to strike down the first one who advanced upon his Master. It was so well aimed, and with such force, that had not Malchus shrunk a little to the left, his head would have been cloven. But "then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

Thus rebuked, and in the face of enemies, he at once fell back confused and unmanned. He expected a struggle, and that sort of courage necessary for such an occasion he had; but another sort, the courage of fortitude, that of Christ, unarmed, unfighting courage, as of a man naked among his enemies,—that had not yet been formed in his soul. Indeed, he never became conspicuous for that courage, for we find him afterward,



even when he had become enlightened and elevated, shrinking from duty simply because of moral cowardice ; so that Paul said, " I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." This was his weak point. He seems to me a man lion-like for war, but timid and shrinking when it came to moral endurance.

Conceive the situation then. He found himself rebuked for a valiant act to which all his nerves and his will were strained up. He saw his Master led off, unresisting, and his Jewish soul, which could not separate power from his conception of the Messiah, throbbed and said, " How can this be God's King, led off by these fellows whom with a few good swords I could have mastered?"

So his ardor chilled ; shame, confusion, disappointment, doubt, fear, took possession of him ; he was shaken all through. But his loyal heart could not quite give way, so, as the multitude moved away, he followed, but " afar off." His heart drew him after ; his cowering dread kept him at a distance ; for in fact he had now really much to fear, especially from Malchus and his friends, though he might escape, for the blow had been given in the dark.

So in this state of mind, trembling from the cold of the early morning, his soul more chilled than his body, half-alienated for the moment from his Master and the cause, his self-respect all gone, he fearfully and stealthily enters an ante-room of the high priest's palace. There, just as he begins to warm himself over a little fire of coals, he

is detected! "A certain maid" (observe it was a woman detects him, it was the sneer of a woman),—"A certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him and said: This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying: Woman, I know him not." He fell, and great was the fall,—nay, from deep down to deep; for in Mark's Gospel this one terrible feature is added: he denied him with cursing and oaths. He swore, profusely and madly, that he knew nothing of him. The man seems thrown into such a horrible agitation of excited fear, shame, degradation, that like a baited and frightened animal he is filled with the rage of fear and breaks out into cursing and oaths. He, Peter, does not know Jesus Christ!

Thus I think the story stands. His original fault was that he had not realized the earthly feebleness and ignominy of the cause he had espoused, and so was quite unprepared, expecting one thing and finding another. His mistaken, confident imagination ruined him. Had he anxiously foreseen the precise trial before him, had he been humbly conscious of his feebleness, he would have rested on the true source of strength, and gone forward, tremblingly before the danger came, but boldly when he met it.

If this view of Peter's case be just, it suggests a comparison between the half-innocent, infantine look of the sources and fountains of a fault and the monster look of the fault itself. If you take the two ends of this short

story and put them together, and say that that is the acorn and this the oak ; that this in a few hours resulted from that, it looks hardly credible. Here, at the start, is simply a bold, brave man who loves his Master, but with a view not spiritual enough,—hence mistakes ; and here at the end, almost in a flash, is fear, a coward ; treachery, a traitor ; lie, a liar ; blasphemy, the whole character in ruins ! A wild romance—but no ! perfectly true to human nature ; for look at any man,—the worst crimes start in half-innocent things of the heart, and end in monsters, and people say : “ I could never have believed this. What a counterfeit this man was ! ” But perhaps he was no counterfeit,—just my own honorable self, put in the same circumstances. Peter was no counterfeit, yet look at him in the palace of the high priest. God only is the final security of man. Mark two things then,—a deep sense of our insecurity when standing alone, and a tender fellow-feeling for the fallen.

The exact likeness of Peter’s denial is not uncommon to-day. I do not know many men who are faithful to their Master in any real emergency. Our convictions are usually held in cowardly subservience to public opinion or to society : whatever is unfashionable or frightful at the moment we dare not be. If there is an exception let me see him, that I may do him honor. Yes, even if he is narrow and foolish in his convictions, yet if they are convictions and not mere self-conceit, and if he stands and does not blench, let me look at him, for I have found

at last a man, and not a shadow. But in a more general way the denial of Jesus Christ is a universal form of sin. I may not deny the Master outside, the Christ of history, but I do deny the Master inside, the Christ of the spirit. Who is the Master inside, the Christ of the spirit? Why, it is truth and duty, whatever high things stand over my heart like a starry firmament, whatever I feel to be high and admirable, whatever says to me, "Do this; you ought,"—all beautiful allegiance to man, to the State, to my neighbor, to God,—all this is Christ the spirit speaking in my soul, and to it all do I say (for it seems so heavenly in my better moments), "I will go to prison or to death, but I will not deny thee." Yet in a moment we go out into the streets and feel as if we had never known him. We trim to please everybody though Christ is not pleased; we take the ruling side and cry it on; we edge aside when any man or any thing is not prosperous; in short, we go with the thing called self, and desert the higher self which is *in* us, but not *of* us. This is the denial of which we are guilty! Though we feel it easy to be virtuous and strong the day before, to resist a temptation, when the temptation is not on us, to-morrow we are other men. Ah, our fugitive, unrooted hearts! If we were judged by what we are fit for, at given moments, we might easily be taken either for angels or devils, as the case may be. One moment we can honestly say, "Though all men desert thee, yet will not I"; another moment, "I don't know you." David

once sang this song : " O God, my heart is fixed,"—but he deceived himself very much. Never, until a man has known the agony of failure, perhaps of crime, never, until he feels the love which he has wounded and which freely pardons him, has he any security.

These are the thoughts suggested to me by the denial of Peter; and now I come to his repentance. Stop here and look again at him: " And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, and he went out and wept bitterly." " And Peter remembered." Amid his denials and bitter cursings he heard the crowing of the cock, the trumpet of the morning, sounding in the silence of the outer air, and looking through the open door, he saw suddenly the face of Christ, who had overheard him, I suppose, and who now looked out at him. Of all wonders, I do not know any like the wonder of a look from certain people at certain times. The eye is a marvellous organ even in animals, but in some human beings it opens at times a glimpse into the depths of the spiritual world. In that drama where the human heart is touched at greater depths than in any other human composition—I mean the tragedy of Othello—the half-divine woman, innocent, wronged, uncomplaining, does but lift her eye, with its world of love and suffering, and a penalty of undying remorse is shot through Othello's very soul; and though the sight passes from him, he can never pass from the remembrance. " That look of thine will hurl my soul from

heaven." The look of a dying mother turned upon a prodigal son, upon him who has broken her heart, yet a mother's look still—ah ! God of mercy, save my soul from such a look, or from the look of any love which has been abused. Anger, vengeance, we can bear ; but not the love of the heart we have most wronged, the silent turn of the eye !

So it was then (yet far other and far more) when Peter caught the eye, the glance of Christ. He felt, as if for the first time, what the Lamb was whom they led to the slaughter, saw into the wronged, unspeakable heart,—saw himself, the denier, as he was,—and was broken to pieces ! That look redeemed him, for it broke his heart. He rushed out into the solitary court, crept perhaps into some corner in the dim light of the daybreak, and there by himself wept bitterly—and wept—and thought—and wept. Yes, Peter, you have sunk very low, to be sure, and denied him, but that look will go with you and convert you and sanctify you. Through all your days it will recall to you, as if by the proclamation of a spirit, your own guilt and the mercy of your Lord. Thus it was that through his crime, his sorrow, and the tenderness of his Lord's love, he passed in one short moment through a long ascent of spiritual life. For there are experiences which work like a purifying furnace of fire, and recast the heart in a moment into new and shining forms. That it was so with Peter, there are many evidences, but I will allude to only one. It is in Mark's Gospel—that is,

Peter's Gospel—that the terrible particular is added, that the denial was with cursing and oaths. That is, Peter would have it so set down,—a most touching proof that the depth of his humility and penitence so lasted that in a distant day and place he was anxious to publish what others were willing to pass in silence,—anxious to proclaim his ignominy to you and me and to the most distant age.

And now, as I have said that we all share in denials like Peter's, I must here ask if we share in a repentance like his. In a sense we are all born to err, and to do those things we ought not to do; but the important question for each man is not, Do I deny my Master? but, Do I see his look? and does the eye of mercy pierce my heart? Certainly I have affliction; certainly I have sin; but is it with me the stuff, the darkness, out of which God is making the daylight? Had Peter gone through life without much trial, and had he come off without much blame, do you think that would have been a better Peter? O no! he was sunk into a murky pit for a moment, deep down among the monsters, that he might keep out of that pit forever after. Affliction and sin, then, may be made of heavenly value. But suppose they are not; conceive for a moment the career of Peter if, denying the Lord who bought him, he had gone on in sheer despairing recklessness in that way. It would just have been the tale of Judas over again, and the name of Peter would sound like the name of Iscariot. What

makes Judas a devil and Peter an apostle? This: Judas seemed incapable of being touched at the heart. True, in remorse he hanged himself, but he was not touched at the heart. Peter was touched. His bitter tears, his soul moved quite through with sorrow and with the worship of love toward him whom he had wronged,—this it was that made Simon into an everlasting rock, against which even the gates of hell should not prevail.

It is through our sorrow and sin that we are born to God, made human indeed. In a sense, to be sure, we are born human; in a sense we are made human by society and civilization; but our true humanity comes out clear from that "godly sorrow" which "worketh repentance not to be repented of." Who then has done evil, and has seen no look, and has not heard the crowing of the cock, but has simply heard a whisper, felt a shadow reminding him,—that whisper, that shadow, is Christ. Stop!—I am treading on the blood of him whose name is Love.

So then, beloved, if we have done evil, let us do so no more. Bad as it has been, it can hardly be worse than the cursing and oaths of Peter; and we can be sure that if we go out and remember, an invisible pity and tenderness are near to lift us up, and to say, "Son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Not long after, when all the horrors of that death were over, two persons were seated near each other on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias,



and the one person said to the other, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" He saith unto him, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He said unto him the second time, and again the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved and wounded at the persistency and tender doubt of the inquiry, and said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." The work was finished.

## PONTIUS PILATE THE GOVERNOR.

MATT. XXVII., 2.

WE consider to-day the character of the man who sat as judge upon Him who shall judge the world,—who delivered up to death the Prince of Life. We know little of him except as a prominent figure in the most original and wonderful scene which the history of man has to offer. His place there—in that once obscure transaction—will make him remembered when every other Roman name is forgotten.

What we know of the man is this: that his rapacity and his contempt of the Jews had made him an unpopular governor, and that his character surpassed the ordinary Roman mark of hard, decisive military cruelty. He trod with an iron heel on the Jews' deepest superstitions, profaned the Holy City by introducing there his eagles and other insignia of his legions, and on one occasion of a Jewish tumult played the assassin so largely and so bloodily as to strike terror and hate through all the people. This cruelty, accompanied by an unusual boldness and irreverence, had also caused him shortly before the Crucifixion to slaughter some of the Jews even at their altar, "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."

When Jesus was brought before such a man as this, and brought not only by the chief rulers but by the people, clamoring for his death, one might naturally think that he, Pilate, would have granted it at once; for what was one life, the life of one Jew, to him, that he should trouble himself to oppose the eager wish of the nation? But the truth is, that, though cruel, there are no signs that he was of an entirely wanton cruelty. Besides, he held in contempt these Jewish rulers; he knew them,—their dark fanaticism blended with the meanest pride and self-seeking,—and he had no disposition to gratify such people. We must remember also that he was a Roman judge, and when it came to a matter of justice, he had the Roman feeling of justice. So he proceeds to ask them of what they accuse Jesus, and shows from the first some slight disposition to be just. But their intense urgency is not to be put aside. Finding that Pilate will not crucify him for blasphemy, and for offences against their law, they adroitly put forth a charge which they know he *must* consider: "He maketh himself a king," for that went against the Emperor. From his interviews with Jesus, however, and from his knowledge of the state of things, he sees the folly of the charge, and sees that the real motive of the Jewish leaders is to get clear of a man of whom they are jealous and afraid. "He knew," it is said, "that for envy they had delivered him."

These things, together with a message from his wife

and the impression left on him by the demeanor of Christ, aroused some degree of anxiety to free him. For this purpose he resorted to a strange device, which could only be thought of by a hard Roman soldier,—he took Jesus, and heavily scourged him, thinking that might be enough to glut their vengeance. And then, the victim being in that pitiable condition, overcome, bleeding, an object too sunken to be feared or even considered, he brought him out before them that they might see that he was to be regarded only with compassion or contempt. He brought him out and showed him as an object of pity or scorn. “*Ecce Homo!*” See him!

But the rulers and the Pharisees, fierce and relentless, their malignity only deepened at the sight, still demand his death.

He then turns from them and virtually appeals to the people, the mob: “You have your choice at this time of the feast to save one great criminal: will you save this man, or Barabbas?” They cried, “Barabbas.”

These efforts failing, Pontius Pilate “took water and washed his hands” in the presence of all, calling them to witness that he was innocent of the blood of this just man, and then, reluctantly and moodily, delivered him to be crucified.

What forced him? The mass of the Jews, mob and rulers, rising about him in fierce tumult, and the word, “If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend,”—this forced him; this rumor he feared; for he was

already an unpopular ruler, and he dreaded his jealous master at Rome ; so he gave way. He gave way, but with no little feeling against the wretches who had forced his conscience, and though he had, I think, some real sense of the intrinsic dignity of Christ, and had certainly a bitter hatred and contempt for the Jews, a hate sharpened by his fears. He *must* do it, he thinks, and he does it. Still he will wreak his bitterness upon them in some way. So he takes the man they have cast out as a malefactor, and proclaims him before them as their king. "Behold your king! This bleeding, pitiable man is a fit king for you. Shall I crucify your king?" he asks with a sneer. At last he set upon the cross these words, written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin : "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Then said the chief priests unto Pilate, "Write not, The King of the Jews ; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written."

Of the further history of Pilate we only know that some years after, he was ignominiously recalled and banished on a charge of cruelty made by the Jewish people, which gives the finish to the career of an impolitic, haughty, and cruel man.

Now let us observe the general state of mind and feeling in which Pilate came to meet this great experience. It is all indicated by his famous question, "What is truth?" His meaning is variously interpreted, from Lord Bacon down. He may have meant no more than

the contemptuous feeling of a Roman man of action, a practical man of business, as to the endless jargon of the schools about truth. Perhaps it was no more than this, which is, essentially, Lord Bacon's idea in calling it a jest. "'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and went out without waiting for an answer," supposing that he understood Christ now,—one of the talkers about truth,—and so thought that he was but an innocent visionary. Ah, Pilate! so conceited, the King of Truth standing before you, and you smiling upon him with your good-natured contempt!

But, further, it is quite possible that Pilate shared the feeling of his age,—that is, a deep though often unconscious despair of any certainty as to matters of greatest moment. If so, instead of being a jest, it expresses a sad and half-bitter feeling. If Pilate himself, and the boasted civilization of his great race, had only this sad uncertainty, it bore witness not only to the need of the King of Truth who stood in Pilate's judgment-hall (and who stood there only to be rejected), but also to another thing. If the very mention of all higher truth had become a matter of sad and bitter doubt, whence was this? Why, from Pilate back through the ancient world, truth was lost because it was not lived. Men trusted to their heads to get it and keep it. To love it in their hearts, to will it into action, to walk by it, was and is, with them and with us, the only divine method of knowing truth. And so when One stood before them who had lived it in

his heart, and had willed it into his heavenly action, and so knew it, was it, and was the king of it, they knew him not, and received him not. They judged by their heads; and to do this is somewhat as if the hound should sear his fine nostrils and hunt altogether by his poor, ignorant eye. "So these things were hid from them."

So while it was true, as he said, that every one who was of the truth heard his voice, yet all the high ones, such as Pilate, could only stand and sneer, or else despair, and say, "What is truth?" and not even wait for a reply. Ah, Pilate! if you had not felt that you knew so much,—if you had felt the want of it in your heart, you would have stopped to hear what that tongue would say; and had you waited, the truth so silent to the proud would have spoken to the humble. You do not want, so you shall not have. Remember that if you treat the truth and the life in one way it will be as silent to you as the heavens at midnight; but if you ask for it in another way it will not fail to speak into your very soul.

Observe next the favorable change which took place in the mind of Pilate toward Jesus. That a man who lavished the lives of Jews as if they were vile dogs should have treated Jesus not so badly as he did, but so well as he did, is a surprise. I suppose the chief cause was the demeanor of Christ; and as the Evangelists tell us so little of this, it is like the discovery of a treasure when we find any thing which gives us new light upon it.

There was something so unusual in every thing Christ said, in the union of dignity and meekness in his manner, and perhaps above all in a peculiar silence, in his remarkable and solemn unconcern, I might say "absence, absorbedness," and this in the supreme moment of his fate, that it first arrested and then awed the superstitious mind of the Governor. The manner of Christ's silence must have had a powerful effect on the imagination. "Answerest thou nothing? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" From your looks and ways you do not seem to know that I am your superior, that you are a mere abject in my hands. I have power to crucify you, and yet you seem unawed. The answer is, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."

This easy elevation above all human power was fitted either to exasperate Pilate, or to bring him down before Christ. And it did a little puzzle and exasperate him, but still more it awed him. And so from that moment he sought yet more to release Jesus. Without effort the prisoner gained a mastery over the judge. "Awe from above had quelled his heart." This is clearly true; for it is recorded that when the charge came to his ears that Christ had "made himself the Son of God, he was the more afraid." Why? Because his own vague feelings pointed to something of the same sort. So with renewed curiosity and wonder he returns to Jesus and says,



“Whence art thou?” It is just the question a man might address to a spirit.

Pilate was also influenced, no doubt, by the charge of his wife : “Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.” It is a beautiful incident that here, at this great crisis, a woman, in the providence of God, should appear in her highest mission, which is, I think, to add the light of better impulses to the darkened path of man.

This high lady, Claudia Procula, had probably heard of Jesus, and perceived—or, what was better, *felt*—that he was from God ; and so, yielding to that instinct which often rises freshest in the bosom of the simple, “she suffered many things,” and when she heard they were about to destroy him, she appealed to Pilate. But he, though he felt the force of his wife’s appeal, was not led by it. The world needed then and needs even yet to be taught that (while woman has her own quiet sphere, which I would not flatter her by saying is above, nor degrade her by saying is below, man, but which is rather by his side,—a marked and various though always quiet sphere, which she cannot transcend without loss,—yet) where a woman acts as the ministrress of the heart to man, as the instructress of some finer insight, he cannot open himself too widely to her instincts. “Have thou nothing to do with that just man,” should have saved Pilate from much ; and though the charge had no better

reason than a woman's dream, we may learn that the dreams of the right and feeling heart are sometimes wiser than the wakefulness of the most sagacious mind, though clothed in state and sitting on a judgment-seat.

But though his conscience is touched by the demeanor of Christ, and by his wife's dream confirming his own awe, yet see, last of all, the vacillations of Pilate, and the final overthrow of his conscience by his interest.

There is no sign that he was in general an undecided man, but altogether the contrary. He was rather of a fiery decision and energy. Yet in this matter he is pitifully weak. He goes out to the crowd and comes back to his prisoner, and goes and comes, declares that he "finds no fault in him," but holds him notwithstanding, and parleys, and finally delivers him to be crucified. Why? Because of a wrong behind him and because of a fear before him. He had done wrong to the Jews, and that tied his hands. He must do as they wish now; he can't afford to displease them any more; another insurrection, and he is ruined. So he who does evil often makes it next to impossible that he should afterward do right. The wrong becomes a fate, and pushes him on to other and greater wrongs which he would not do.

Now this helplessness of the haughty Pilate fills him with bitterness, and he has but one way to express it: he points to the poor, marred, broken man before him,—  
"See, this is your King,"—but, bitter or not, he must yield.

His sense of justice, his superstition, his awe, in short all his better nature struggles with his interest and fears, but he must yield, and he yields, and washes his hands and says, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Ah, Pilate! you cannot shift responsibility in that way. The stain of that blood of unspeakable love and suffering will never be washed out! He hands Jesus over to the slave's death, too horrible for slaves or even for animals, and yet thinks he has done quite enough for justice and mercy, and washes his hands in the pure water, and goes his way to other business or pleasure, hardly satisfied, but forgetting perhaps, even while it is in progress, the crucifixion of the Son of God.

*Interest*, attending to our interest, and not looking deeper to the things which are true, honest, just, etc.; selfishly saving ourselves and not saving others,—that is the deadly sin of the soul. As life advances, as its interests become the object of intense affection, as from the very nature of society we must take care of our property, interest takes possession of the heart. The soft, pure whisperings of conscience, of a thousand noble obligations, are hushed in the bosom, and the business voice of mere prudence is almost alone heard counselling and directing. Pilate crucified Jesus Christ from prudence. He saved himself for the time by crucifying Christ,—quite unlike that Christ who "saved others; himself he could not save."

Let us beware that we from prudence do not crucify

the Son of God afresh. Learn from Pilate, for his crime is thick around us. He will make this and that effort, for he cannot at once violate all his conscience, but as to running the risk of displeasing the Emperor,—that he cannot do. He will do all he can this side of *that*,—then feels satisfied, washes his hands, and crucifies Jesus Christ! I pray you lay that to heart. If a better impulse moves you, or if but its shadow touches you, if something of affection or prosperity draws you, if conscience moves you in any way to holiness, to its peace and rest, what will you do? You will yield a little, perhaps make a few sacrifices; but the great interest, the darling object, the Emperor in the distance,—that you will not yield! Nay, you think you ought not to yield that, you ought not to be expected to go so far, so you wash your hands in clean water, go on to live the low, poor life, and say, “I am innocent,”—but remember the simple, solemn lesson you have heard to-day from the story of “Pontius Pilate the Governor.”

## JUDAS ISCARIOT.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.—MATT. xxvii., 3-5.

THE image of Judas stands, I think, before the Christian world as that of an evil spirit rather than of a man. Indeed, I suppose that to most persons the archfiend himself—Satan, Abaddon, Apollyon, the liar and father of lies, the murderer from the beginning, or by whatever name he be known—is hardly a more striking figure of iniquity than is Judas, surnamed Iscariot.

The depth of this feeling of horror, I may here remark, measures the extent of men's reverence for the character of Christ; for it is as His betrayer that the common heart rises up against him. His wickedness is felt to be something beyond nature, inconceivable. This view, however, is not only unjust, but it is not fitted to leave the proper impression. Men gain but little wisdom or warning from a specimen of wickedness which they think wholly unlike themselves. It seems to have nothing to do with them. Let us look, therefore, a little closer at this man. Let us see if his guilt is not after all

human, conceivable, and less remote from us than we imagine. If we take merely the outline of the facts, his conduct appears out of human possibility. And so do all other instances of signal iniquity. But when we come to see into the whole account and progress of the matter, when we come to state another man's case as he would state it himself, it is very different.

It appears at first, I say, actually unimaginable that a man chosen by Christ as one of twelve, who was a near witness of his career of miracles, and what was more, who from conversing, travelling, living with him, saw day by day all the features of a character unrivalled in beauty, attractiveness, power,—that, in the face of all, this man could, without personal provocation,—nay, in remembrance no doubt of acts and signs of love such as Christ only could show,—could deliberately, and for thirty trifling pieces of silver, go out of the bosom of the little family, and bargain away the life of his innocent Master. Stated in this general way it is incredible. There is no such man.

Under this impression there have been those, both in ancient and modern times who have been driven to an opposite extreme. Some hold that he did it to aid in the redemption of mankind, yielding himself as an instrument to that which he knew was necessary; some that he knew the Jews were plotting, and judged it would be best that the capture of Christ should be hastened at the time of the feast, for then he could best deliver himself.

Others claim that if he was base he did not think death would be the result, but that the power of Jesus would prevail. No less a person than Neander supposes that Judas took this as a method of resolving his doubts as to the Messiah. If he were such, then victory; if not, deserved death! "Thus Judas is supposed to be either an honest man misunderstood, or a deluded one, who still, however, was no common man, but exhibited even in his despair the wreck of apostolic greatness."

On a closer view, however, and without this extreme, we may get some account of the matter consistent with our knowledge of human nature.

As to the evidences which Christ had given of supernatural power, strong as they were, I think I may venture the remark that they were not as impressive in that age as they would be now, because, as there was a popular belief in wonders, it was possible to confound the two things: a miracle was not so much something alone as it now is. Besides, we are very apt to attribute too much knowledge to Christ's disciples at that time, and to suppose that their thoughts and impressions as to him were much more clear and vivid than they really were.

These remarks are to show how it was possible for Judas to betray a Being who gave such signs that he was something more than man. Again, we can hardly conceive but that the influence upon him of the character of our Lord would be at least sufficient to prevent such a crime. But we do not reflect that this man must have

been matured in the worst dispositions and habits before he knew Christ ; and when the character reaches a certain point in evil the light poured in it, however intense, does not irradiate it, but rather blackens and consumes. It is probable, also, that he began to follow Christ for selfish ends only.

St. John relates that on one occasion Mary, the sister of Lazarus, took a pound of costly ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus, and that Judas, when he saw it, said, " Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor ? " " This he said," says St. John, " because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

Now I suppose the truth about Judas is something like this: He was a sordid, degraded Jew, seeking gain in any way. He was one in whom there was originally little sensibility toward higher things, and that little was almost lost by low habits. When Christ appeared, and it became likely that he would establish a kingdom and be greatly followed, it seemed to Judas that here was a noble chance for getting gain ; and so he joined himself to our Lord in the most intimate way. Still I suppose that he may have really had some such belief in Christ as that he was sent from God, but this quite apart from all religious feeling ; and if any one cannot conceive this state of mind, he does not understand the Jewish character at that period.

Having joined himself to the disciples, Judas began to



take such advantage of the situation as he could, and looked forward, no doubt, to a rich harvest. Such a person, with such ends, might live long under our Lord's teachings and either misunderstand, or be quite insensible to them. Nay, more. As Christ saw through his character, and once said, you remember, "One of you is a devil," I think it very likely that Judas felt that sort of enmity toward him which is very common where a man is conscious of being detected in baseness; and this feeling is often the more exaggerated and bitter in proportion to the very excellence of the person toward whom it is felt.

If this account of the case be probable, we can conceive how such a betrayal was possible. Such a man as we have set forth, seeing the worldly fortunes of his Master about to close disastrously, exasperated, as I have said, by imaginary injury, and, more than all this perhaps, believing, even from Christ's own confession, that it was His inevitable fate to be taken, and arguing with himself no doubt that gain might be got while no real injury would be done, was thus led to tamper with the priests. Still I think he held the last step in his own power until at the supper, when he saw that Christ had penetrated his designs,—“Verily I say unto you there is one of you which shall betray me.” This precipitated the result. He arose and went out, it is said; he had passed the crisis.

Now this, or something similar to this, is and must be

the case with all human wickedness ; it would be merely infernal if it had not some such progress and motives. I have attempted to show Judas in this light, because when we view him in another way than as a man like ourselves it is of no advantage to us ; but when we reflect on the causes by which one who was once a child in the arms of a mother, once a boy with something of the heart of a boy, became, through a series of imperceptible stages, Judas Iscariot, we receive an indescribable sense of the fearfulness of those beginnings of evil of which we are all conscious.

Judas is placed before us, the most awful figure in the history of the world, a model of sin developed, that we may see its distinct features, and discerning in them a horrible likeness to what is in ourselves, may recoil as if at the sight of hell.

This character is lifted as if on a lofty pedestal before the eyes of the race ; and side by side with the image of terrific meanness and guilt stands another Figure. There they stand together through time and eternity, the betrayer and the Betrayed,—the one to repel us with infinite destestation ; the other, “ full of grace and truth,” to draw us with its infinite attractions.

Such was the character of Judas. It has lessons of deep meaning for men. His strongest passion seems to have been avarice ; and the all but incredible baseness and cruelty to which it led him are but an extreme instance of the effects to which it often leads. Perhaps no vice

takes such a powerful grasp upon the heart, so fascinates and besots it; and I am certain there is none which so dries up the soul and hardens it all through. I know nothing which makes a man more calmly base and cruel.

Although it seldom attains its perfect maturity in the soul, yet there are few persons, I think, who do not in some way and degree feel its effects. Those who feel it the least, if they would examine their hearts, would find that its iron hoof had left its print somewhere within them, had crushed out something which otherwise would have flourished. We have many exhortations to guard against other striking vices, all of which are needed, but I question whether this insidious, cold-blooded evil receives as much attention as it deserves.

Another lesson this character gives us. I suppose that the intercourse of Judas with Christ, instead of bettering, injured him. If a man has gone so far that good influences have not a reclaiming effect, the stronger these influences are, the more they will act like a curse upon him. What a picture it is!—Judas at the side of Christ, sitting at his feet, reclining with him at the table, eating of the same dish, with him in the desert, in the city, alone with him, yet Judas still, unchanged, and, under the purest influences ever known among men, growing ripe for the worst act ever seen or heard of among them! Oh, let those who sit within holy places, who learn often of holy things, but who, having ears, hear not,—let them remember that there is verily such a thing “as a savor of death unto death!”

There is a striking lesson also in the hypocrisy of Judas. He must have been a hypocrite through his whole career; but there is one instance at the close which will be remembered while the world shall last, a sort of ideal, never to be repeated, but set forth to show how far such iniquity can go.

You remember—who has ever forgotten?—that moment when at night a band of soldiers, with torches and lanterns and weapons, entered the dark avenues of the solitary garden, their torches flashing through the gloom of the lofty trees. There in the darkness the Divine Sufferer was preparing himself for his end. He heard the tramp of the soldiery, and saw the lights as they drew nigh. “Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master! and kissed him,”—kissed him tenderly, as the word means. The traitor might have pointed out his victim in a thousand other ways, but it was his choice to betray him while he kissed him. An unrivalled enormity!

But we cannot congratulate ourselves that crime of any form has died out of the world. The doing of injurious things by smooth means is now not uncommon. How often is this practised by men who are not themselves even distinctly conscious of the crime! How often do men suffer under fair pretences and words of courtesy! How often is a reputation injured under profession of great kindness, and slander begins her deadliest work by

eulogy! There is an Italian proverb, the purport of which is that we "should beware of those who show us unusual kindness." Such a saying could hardly have become a proverb, unless there had been a good deal of Judas in human nature.

"Hail, Master! and he kissed him." Oh, with infinite disgust let us put away from us all forms and degrees of this cowardly vice, and let candor, which is always the sign of a genuine and courageous heart, mark the whole intercourse of man with man!

Reflect too, a moment, on the repentance of Judas. In the text which records the closing scene of his life it is said: "When he saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." When the thing was done, its real character seems for the first time to have broken on his mind, and then a sense of the crime, awfully vivid, seems in a moment to have taken the place of his former perfect deadness. Conscience, which appeared not only lulled but extinct, started up into terrific life. He comes and confesses; he yields up the silver; they will not take it; he casts it at their feet, saying, "I have sinned in that I have shed the innocent blood"; life cannot be borne, and he departs and hangs himself.

I shall say nothing about this, but only point your attention to one characteristic of our moral nature which is

here laid bare; I mean the revival of a conscience. I believe that, however insensible the heart may become in vice, there are circumstances which will give to it a sort of new birth, and though a man may live half a life with scarcely an idea of remorse, he may at the end of it perish from nothing else than terrors of conscience. If, then, an extinct conscience is capable of such a revival in this state of existence, with what power do you think it may come forth when it enters eternity and sees its acts as they stand there?

Consider also this : that it is a matter of our experience that the conscience may be revived, not as a monitor and guide to lead us back to good, but simply as an avenging power. I do not know that you have ever taken notice of the fact. After a certain length gone in sin, the conscience, if it reappears, may come, not in its first office of mercy, but in a second office of mere judgment, when ingenuous penitence for sin seems no longer possible, and hopeless remorse takes its place. Now these two facts—that conscience may spring in giant life out of the very ashes of the soul, and that when it does reappear, it may be simply and only an instrument of vengeance—give us startling glimpses of what may be, from the very constitution of the soul, the coming history of all who are irreclaimably wicked.

Judas betrayed the Lord, but in this he was but a living representative of a greater betrayer,—*sin*. The mystery and power of that iniquity which began with our

race and is here to-day,—that is the mighty Iscariot which forced the Lord to suffering and death. I mean to make no fanciful statement, to offer no fanciful likeness between ourselves and this traitor, but there is no doubt that it was that which is common to you and to me and to all, which was the real cause of that awful transaction at which the universe is amazed. What were these priests, or this Jew Judas, or their devices to effect the death of the Son of God? It was this dark fact—sin—entirely and only which did it! And I would have you, as you review the great catastrophe of the sufferings of Christ, to keep always in mind what made them necessary, to realize, as you pass through these scenes of tragedy, atrocity, and bitter evil, the inevitable and terrible issues of that element of death called sin.

These characters are purposely placed together and in contrast in the evangelic narrative, that they might reveal each other, as light and darkness in a picture. Here then see placed side by side the two possibilities of human nature, and every man called to accept the destiny of one or the other,—nay, actually accepting it. Toward this height, or this depth, we all go.

But while the iniquity of the betrayer fully realizes to us the depth and bitterness of sin, the innocent meekness and love of Him who was sold is intended to attract us, to fix us by the beauties of holiness, to assure us of the gracious reception He will grant us. If Judas is set forth to teach us of sin, Jesus is set forth by his side to

tell us of love and forgiveness. The one loudly speaks to me of my own degraded nature under the curse of sin ; the other more loudly cries to me, " Behold the Lamb of God ! " Behold the divine sacrifice offered once for all for the sins of the whole world ! The innocent Head betrayed to death, that I might have life, and have it more abundantly ! Behold the Lamb !



## STEPHEN.

**A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.—ACTS vi., 5.**

I SPEAK to-day of Stephen. We usually think of the primitive Church as having one thing to do,—namely, to bear up against and convert the Roman world. But that was only one of three things it had to do. First, and greatest, it had to learn to know itself, whether it was really a new religion ; not merely a half-Judaism, but unbound and free in the divine truth and life of Christ. Second, it had not only to keep peace and unity in its own bosom on the one hand, but on the other hand to withstand the force of the outside Jews, in the midst of whom it was born. And third, and last,—and least, I think,—it had to convert the Roman world. Not one of these things, but all of them, had it to do—or to perish.

Now, in the first and greatest of these labors—to know itself, to realize its new and mighty spirit, and strip itself of Jewish bonds—Stephen stands first ; Stephen, the finest product of the Pentecostal era, the first name in the story of the Church.

Paul, the most illustrious and the mightiest of the sons of men, comes in but as the successor of Stephen,—may I not say his pupil ? may I not say his offspring ? I

know that Stephen appears and disappears in our Christian history as a flash in the heavens, but the memory and influence of that flash are as fixed as the zodiac. Who he was, from whence, we do not know, except that he was a Grecian Jew, which means much the same as a foreign Jew, speaking Greek and reading the Old Testament in Greek,—not a Jew of Judea. These two classes of Jews were much separated, and the foreign Jews had their own synagogues in a particular part of Jerusalem.

Among the foreign Jews were some who were naturally less bigoted than the home-staying Jew, so among them Christ was accepted with more enlarged views.

Stephen was the first of the Grecian Jews who left his mark. What manner of man was he? We hear that the Church chose him, as the first among seven men, to heal a division in the Church in respect to the daily distribution of food to poor widows.

I stop here one moment to remark how promptly the Church took the attitude of charity in the world. It was known at once, not merely by its cry of "Salvation" for the souls of men, but by the putting forth of its hand to save from all distress. It came into a scene where women (specially childless widows) and indeed all the poor were the saddest outcasts, altogether helpless; and it began at once to treat them as children of its own, of its household and hearth. And permit me to add that by a beautiful reward of Divine Providence, power sprung at once out of its mercy. By its pity to sorrow, to poor deserted

creatures, it raised them, it made them children of Christ, and powerful in their gratitude and love ; it took up the things which "were not," and by them brought to naught the things which were ; it took up wasted souls, and by the joy it gave them made them splendid souls and mighty for Christ.

But to return : "There arose a murmuring" among the Grecian Jews against the Hebrew Jews, because *their* widows were neglected in the daily giving of food. As this was a vital matter then, and as they wanted a man who, though a prominent Grecian, had the confidence of both sides,—a man of heart and discretion,—"they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." To them no excellence of gifts fitted a man for a public office even of a secular sort, unless his gifts were controlled and purified by a higher Spirit.

Now this selection was the first attestation to the character of Stephen. Then again, the results of his life and work at that time were great, and had the attestation of God ; for "the word of God increased ; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly ; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith,"—in all which results Stephen seems to have been prominent. We hear again that Stephen, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." And he was a mighty speaker also ; for, the Jews of the synagogue of the Libertines and others attempting to resist his views and his sway, he so spoke that "they were

not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake,"—the highest testimony that could be given to eloquence and force of thought. A conspicuous figure he was then.

But his rapid advance in a larger Christianity, quite beyond what had yet been heard of, went so far as to seem to imply irreverence for the temple and for the Jewish law, and fastened the malignant eyes of the Jews upon him. He was arraigned, and he answered the charge by giving a long and strange history of the Jewish people. But if we look intelligently into that singular defence of his, we shall see that he reveals in it three things: First, his own character, which was full of reverence for his people's history and for the laws which God gave them. But he reveals at the same time his sense that God was an advancing God,—that revelation was not a thing done and finished at one epoch. And he reveals last of all his sense of his own people,—namely, as a people ever adhering to the past by a vicious conservatism, and stupidly opposing the new openings of revelation and Providence,—persecuting savagely and to death the new prophets as they arose. At this last charge the Jews yelled out with hate. He had struck them on their hearts, and so he must die.

They dragged him out, and they stoned him. The Christians looked on; and his demeanor through it all was so beautiful, the sweetness was so blended with grandeur, that nothing as yet had so struck the imagina-

tion of the early church. He went out to his Jewish death with such an unearthly air, his face in such a blaze of feeling, that for a moment it shone as though it had been the face of an angel.

The Jews, in the rage of their fanaticism, were just like tigers or a nest of snakes. They hissed and gnashed their teeth, and their spring upon their victim was quick and fatal. To be sweet and peaceful, to be uncringing before them in his defence, to be gentle and wise, yet true, and at the proper moment charging home upon them like a lion of truth, and then to go out and meet that death with the beauty of peace and even love, was something beyond human. Nay, so far as we can judge from the narrative, so uplifted was Stephen, so centred, absorbed, lost, in divine feeling, that not for one instant through the whole did he seem to suffer. It was a pure triumph of soul, rising almost easily above hate and bloody stones and death. There was an inward assurance which actually saw heaven opened,—saw beloved and majestic figures over him, welcoming and waiting to receive him. The serpents could not sting; the stones killed, but did not hurt; and at last, collecting all his energies into a loud cry, which rang, I suppose, to the outskirts of the crowd (and into many a heart), he said, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” and then (more quietly, perhaps,) “Lord, receive my spirit,” and died. “And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

“ He heeded not reviling tones,  
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,  
Though cursed, and scorned, and bruised with stones :

“ But looking upward, full of grace,  
He prayed, and from a happy place  
God’s glory smote him on the face.”

Thus Stephen led forward in the long procession of martyrs. But he was not merely a martyr and the first in order, but there were such affecting peculiarities about him and his death, that his boldness and exhilaration shed a boldness and an exhilaration upon all Christian martyrdom to come. He began and formed its noble and true style,—I mean not merely and barely to die, but to die a peaceful and even festive death.

I wish it were ours, like him, not only to meet in trust and firmly the great crises of duty, but to meet them as he did with something of a divine gayety,—our faces shining. True we must deeply honor the man who is steady though he struggle, steady though he be darkened and sad; but he is to be envied who takes, in all great, hard duty, the joyous tone of Christian martyrs.

Wrong views have been taken of this event then and since. The conduct of Stephen was imprudent, I dare say many of the Christians said. Why not soften the points of difference? Things were going on in a rather peaceful way between Christians and Jews. Peter and James did not make such strong points as this Stephen; though Christians, they were good and faithful

Jews yet, and seemed to care as much for Jewish usage as any Pharisee. Yes, to be sure ; things would possibly have gone on in a peaceful way, and possibly the new and feeble Christianity—from the old habits of the apostles, and from strong Jewish prejudices in their hearts—would have been smoothed away until it was left as one of the many Jewish sects, and no more. We see enough afterward in James and Peter to warrant this fear. A strong position must be taken early and now, and Stephen was the man to take it, and begin that bold cutting away from Judaism which Paul completed. But then why did he come out in this personal and dreadful way on his judges?—"Ye stiff-necked Jews, which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and of that Just One ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."

Yes, this *was* bold, I will allow, and imprudent also, as the wisdom of man goes ; but there are times when prudence is a very mean virtue. It was prudence in Peter to shrink as he did long afterward in Antioch ; but it was nobleness in Paul to withstand him " to the face, because he was to be blamed." Yes, and this imprudence of Stephen was but a strict copy of the imprudence of Christ, who, though usually full of gentleness, could be very extreme toward proud transgressors. Stephen did but share in this terrible " wrath of the Lamb."

The truth is, when the pure spirit in a man justifies and urges it, when it is done in the face of death, against

self, purified from self all through, done simply in the interests of truth, done from a noble indignation against wrong, done from a generous devotion to Christ,—then a blaze of feeling, though imprudent as the lightnings are imprudent, will at last be found to be “the wisdom of God” as well as “the power of God.” Nothing so wise as these divine follies; for oft we find, “When our deep plots do pall, there’s a divinity that shapes our ends.”

It is again and again found in the great moments of history that the fate of the world is committed to these divine extremists. I think it was Oliver Cromwell who said, “We never rise so high as when we know not where we are going.”

But again, people said, no doubt, that this death was sadly premature. From all we can see of what Stephen was, there was then lost to the church, just at the start of his career, such a man that no one can say how great his future would have been. While he lived, wonders came forth all around him, and perhaps far greater things than these were behind. But I will not say, for, like every other unknown career, it is a great *perhaps*. No wonder, however, that “devout men carried him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”

But great as his loss was, and splendid as might have been his future life, far more grand, I think, was the divine fortune of his death. His death meant something. It was, for example, a solemn and potential protest against that false conservatism which was so deep in the



Jewish nature that it destroyed Judaism and threatened Christianity. He died, not strictly because he was a Christian, but because he was more a Christian than the Christians,—because he was striding on before them,—because his vigorous growth broke boldly through the Jewish shell,—because Christianity, the new faith, enlarged to its true stature before him. He died because he was too much a Christian ; and his death thus began the complete separation between the two churches.

This was one thing. Another and a more general effect was this : his death shed life into the Christian heart. For the moment, to be sure, its effects looked disastrous. Persecutions were let loose, and scattered the disciples to the winds. But, like seeds of life, wherever they were scattered they took root.

It is a singular law that out of death life comes forth, but it is found everywhere, not only through all nature, but up through history and through the hearts of men. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The harvests come out in gold from the death of the seeds.

It so happens that in the case of Stephen we see clearly one instance of this power,—we can trace one thread of it. When the stoning commenced, "the witnesses," it is said, "laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul." "And Saul was consenting unto his death." At that hour, and for a little while after, the

rage and savageness of Saul seemed to increase, but I do not doubt that the sacred touch was then given, and though Saul went on raging and breathing out slaughter, he was really treading on his own heart. The face of the dying Stephen—one glance at it—worked and worked in that fine soul, and at last came forth in an outburst of revelation on the way to Damascus. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” burst into his ears; and the voice, though it came from heaven, came through his own heart. Now if Stephen had died, only to make the first touch on the heart of Saul, and to do no more, it would have been enough; for in that fact the history of the world was changed.

I have now said enough of Stephen and his death, and it is proper that I should say something of that Christian martyrdom which his death began. Through the early ages of the church, perhaps the martyrdoms of Christians did as much for Christianity as all other facts combined. But it was soon abused. It was so sweet a thing to die for Christ—a thing so hallowed, and so attended with all the honors of the church—that martyrdom became at times a Christian mania and a Christian fashion; and men and women recklessly and foolishly *provoked* death. Yet even this abuse shows how high the human spirit can rise; and shows also how wonderful was the age when such an abuse, such a fashion as dying for Christ, could exist.

As to us to-day, nothing could be further from our

taste than a martyr-church. Yet I must say, that it is the infallible test of a living church. The test of the church in every age is not this and not that,—it is not even Luther's great test of a standing or falling church,—much less details of dogma, and far less details of form,—but this: Has it the martyr-spirit? The church is, and must be, a city built in blood. (I know an old proverb which says: "Cursed is he that buildeth a city in blood." But that meant the blood of others; to build in our own blood is quite another thing.)

Well, if this be the test, it is bad for us, for there is nothing from which the age seems further than from the martyr-spirit. Yet no! I do not think it. The form changes; the thing remains. The world yet has its "noble army of martyrs,"—women and men who in some shape are sacrificed to Christ, to duty, to public duty, to private duty, to filial affection, to parental affection,—sacrificed quietly and not in the public market-place,—who perish under heavy burdens, but bear them to the end,—cover up great sorrows and bow the head. The blood of the martyrs still flows, though not at the stake; for where there is no dying in sacrifice, there is living in sacrifice,—a saying no to the whole range of "flesh, world, and devil."

The church has been too full of asceticisms; let us not share in such superstitions. Take your life as God gave it, and make the most of it. But be sure to take it *all*,—higher as well as lower. Don't sacrifice your likeness

to God, your supreme self, to a few mean interests and to vulgar and worldly follies. Be truly human. Deny your low self and do it gladly too. As Stephen died gladly, let us live gladly; for the martyr-life is, after all, a glad life. Self-denial puts iron into the blood, and joy.

Ah! we are all pleasure-seekers; but we don't find pleasure,—at least not as he does who first has the delight of high duties, and then the delight of righteousness, who keeps himself braced and does not go loose about the world,—who has a Master whom he is glad to please! That is the beautiful martyrdom to which *we* are called. We pity the old martyrs; but I suppose the sweetest, loftiest moments ever known were the moments of such martyrs, filled with all the splendid life of self-giving,—“losing life to find it.” Nay, our pity should be for ourselves, so dead that we have even forgotten the energy and joy of a great devoted feeling. We live every sort of life but the life of high impulse, the life of the heart. The days are far gone when such men as Stephen could die with shining faces,—when such books could be written as the Gospel and Epistles of St. John, which sound now like the song of a nightingale (a singular, unearthly music), such as you may have heard among the thick trees of England on a moonlight night of June. O give us back that old love! and then, though we are bruised and bleeding men, we shall daily “see heaven opened,”—shall see that high and gracious Figure, and our faces shall shine as though they had been the faces of angels!

## SAUL OF TARSUS.

SAUL has become to instructed eyes perhaps the most interesting man in all history. Yet every outside thing was against him,—a plain, even ugly Jew, seemingly half-mad, in open resistance to nearly everybody, to Jew, to pagan, to Judaism, to Christianity, in his early stages fierce, even bloody; known first as the Wolf of the Church, and, once inside the Church known as a disturber; known to many to-day as one bristling with a strange, half-Jewish theology, which has at once elevated and constrained the Roman mind for eighteen hundred years.

He was born in Tarsus, an important city of Cilicia,—“a citizen of no mean city,”—the son of parents above the ordinary level of life, taken to Jerusalem and there brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the first of the doctors, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, profiting in the Jewish religion “above many my equals in mine own nation,” as he himself says.

It was in the early prime of his manhood, and in the pride and fervor of his soul as a Jewish scholar of the first promise, with a high destiny before him,—to be a Gamaliel, perhaps,—it was then that occurred the outbreak against the followers of the lately crucified

Christ, Saul abetting and presiding ; and the holy Stephen was stoned, and the men who made ready to crush Stephen with stones laid their clothes at his feet.

At that moment and at his conversion I think I understand Saul very well. We all know the exterior of this great fact,—the journey, the transcendent light, “above the brightness of the sun,” Saul lying, smitten dumb, blinded, on the earth ; but let me present the interior of all this,—the miracle in the soul of Saul.

He looked, through all this wrong and blood, an Até cruel as death, and *was* a fury, but why ? Because he loved the ancient law, and felt that these new men, these Galileans, desecrated the holiest ; and so in a passion for God he trod God's enemies under his feet. He seemed the embodied spirit of the old law, and of its holy vengeance. He seemed a new Elijah hewing Agag in pieces. Thus he went on, “breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” and dragging the innocent victims to prison. Though he saw in their faces what he had seen in the face of Stephen, a look as though they had been angels, yet all the more he crushed down his own heart, its remorse and compassion, and growing fiercer the more his own pity touched him, he seemed to pass into a frenzy of hate, being exceedingly cruel. All this is indicated in the Lord's words : “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?”

In this mood he journeyed to Damascus, and through the long distance of the road, left to his own

thoughts, and to the remembrance of the innocent and meek victims so lovely and appealing in their wrongs and sufferings, and seeing the one sacred light in all their faces which seemed the very image of the Lord for whom they died, the better part of that large heart, its reverence, its tenderness, rose up. He was not merely a Jew. He had within him a responsiveness, not only to the old sacred traditions, but to whatever was human, and this rose up and struggled with his fury. So, when he saw a vision in the way, and heard a voice, his heart answered; he fell smitten to the ground, and blinded by the blaze of the exceeding light which shone around him as well as in him, he was taken by the hand and led into the city, a man redeemed from darkness into the exceeding light.

Here, before his long Christian history begins, you have the man and the work he was to do. You see at once the intensity, the depth, the largeness of Saul, the unspeakable richness and power of the first of the apostles. This was a nature which, by its intensity, might have extirpated Christianity from Judea; but it rebounds through its nobler susceptibilities and starts up into an archangel of Christ. He was converted, as we say.

As to the after-career and character of St. Paul, I am in despair of presenting any thing adequate,—not from a want of matter; for I scarcely know a case, even in modern history, where the man is more actually before us,

and I should say that no historical person of his own period is known a hundredth part as well. Not, then, from any want of matter, but because of its abundance, I am at fault ; and so, by a few extracts from his history, and a few sentences from his letters, I will give some impressions of him.

In doing this I might illustrate the natural gifts of Paul, his singular power of speech and action, but if I spoke of that it would not be in the usual manner of books and the pulpit. We often hear of the perfection of his logic, and of his skill in speech. He has his own logic, and powerful it is, to be sure, but sometimes no more like the Greek logic than a wild, sublime scene in nature is like a cultivated garden. He is also eloquent, and he himself may well call his letters "powerful," for they express a new world of feeling. But I shall not speak of his writings as writings, for they are not so much an expression of thought as the revelation of a great personality ; and every sentence is a throb of a new and an astonishing spirit. Sometimes he speaks as tenderly and variously as a mother talks with a young child, sometimes with a force that is a new revelation of spiritual might, and always with the refinement and elevation of the noblest of gentlemen. But still bring not your ideas of logic and eloquence to his truly inspired pages. His feelings are his only arts.

He is full of meaning. Wherever you touch him he shines, as do the waters of the sea when you touch them



at night. His riches indeed are so great, so heaped, that the reader sometimes is left poor because of the abundance. In brief, his was a mind as pure, and of as dark, rich depths as a clear, deep pool whose surface shivers into showers and jets of brilliants, and responds to every breath with meaning and beauty. But name him not in the ranks of literature or philosophy, or as any thing artificial: he is as wild and full as nature.

Nor shall I even speak of Paul's mighty will, for there have been wills as mighty in very low souls. I shall speak of nothing indeed but that soul of his soul,—the Christian heart, and shall illustrate by his own words and history. First, his confidence in God,—“I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, shall be able to separate me from the love of God.” Consider his hopefulness toward man. You will best see this in those singular chapters which he wrote when called to speak to persons of very low traits. To the drunkard, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.” To thieves, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

He calls the most sunken human nature from the lowest and meanest ground, to rise like the lark straight to the highest heaven; and that hope, that faith in man, touches the debased soul and converts the wicked.

And what he taught he did. He asked no high thing

of others which he himself did not first exhibit. "I have coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Then, next, his love, first to the Jew,—“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish” (Indeed!) “that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh;” secondly, to the race,—“I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.” He first took up the cry of Christ and demanded brotherhood for all men. And as he went on further and further, through outlying regions of Gentiles, his noble heart had visions in the night of men of Macedonia, and he heard in his slumber appeals,—“Come over and help us,”—appeals which he never resisted. He showed, again, love to the renegade and shameless sinner, the reprobate of the church, whom his Jewish soul naturally abhorred.

As to women, to be sure, he is thought harsh, and he certainly does not share in some of the notions now beginning to arise. “Let your women keep silence in the

churches," etc. He is clearly for subordination and order, though a certain honored Christian body (I mean the Friends) set aside his authority in such matters. But most unjust would it be to judge his general spirit from one or two points of wise severity. Nothing can surpass his tenderness, consideration, and appreciativeness toward that sex.

But above all, and a matter of transcendent wonder, is his love for Christ. "The love of Christ constraineth me,"—that was the meaning of his life. His whole spirit was melted down in gratitude, in adoration, in love, in loyalty. For Christ all sufferings were dear. "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in distresses, for Christ's sake." The very name is so sweet to his lips that he likes to make every sentence beautiful and weighty with it. He repeats it with a frequency which seems barbarous if you do not feel the love that is in the tender monotony. "For him to live was Christ." He longed that his spirit should be made like Christ's; that his life in every act should be a new shape of Christ in the earth; that his natural mean life should die and disappear, and the life he lived be a repeating of the heavenly life he worshipped; and that when Christ had transformed him into His own likeness, he should be offered back as a sacrificial gift to Him that bought him and won him by His love and by His blood.

Let me illustrate the trials of this man in all points, and see how he endured them. Trial stands at the

beginning and reaches unto the end of his career. At the very start, beginning as he did alone, the Jews, instinctively knowing their enemy, "took counsel to kill him; and they watched the gates day and night. Then, the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket." So he escaped to Jerusalem, and there "assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." Here begin the suspicion and keen hate of a large branch of the Christian church toward Paul, at first because they distrusted the persecutor, and afterward because he preached a Gospel of larger freedom than theirs.

This was one trial. But why enumerate his trials? Hear and mark his own story and confession, every word of which contains a history: "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that

which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

This is not rhetoric; it is the soberest history. So far from exaggerating, he does not even mention some of the greatest causes of affliction; and this catalogue of troubles was written when he was a great way from the end of his career. If there were time, I should mention three which he has quite omitted,—trials to his faith, the trials of being misunderstood,—from the start to the close he was the misunderstood apostle,—and lastly all the trials in his own body.

In general he must have had rare physical endurance, though in a body extremely delicate and nervous. The high spirit in him carried him over every thing, almost over death itself. You know in a general way that he was not a man of impressive presence,—“I who in presence am base among you; they say my bodily presence is weak and my speech contemptible,”—but there was one bodily ill which carried the evil to its height and which most keenly troubled him. He calls it “a thorn in the flesh, sent to buffet him.” It seems that it was some nervous disorder, which distorted and caricatured his face and manner, and dreadfully humiliated him.

Think of this gifted soul, overflowing with the fulness of whatever was divine, made a caricature in the very act of speech. He calls it a “messenger of Satan,” for it was an exquisite wrong, and it was planted just where it broke his power to pieces and turned the noblest man into scorn and shame.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities; for when I am weak then am I strong."

So through all his endurances and trials, what supported him, do you ask? The high affections of his spirit, his life lived in the presence of the Invisible. These made him the superior in all emergencies of whatever nature. Hence he says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair."

Do you wonder that "his spirit was stirred in him" at Athens, "when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry," and that he spoke with more than the dignity of an Athenian? Do you wonder that he could reason of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" before Felix and Drusilla? Do you wonder that at Lystra he scorned and was horror-stricken when they would make him a god, and when at the next moment the base multitude dragged him out of the city as dead? Do you wonder at his calmness in all brutal tumults raised about him by the Jews? Do you wonder that when beaten and bloody and friendless, his feet in the stocks, and he thrust into the dark dungeon at Philippi, he sang praises unto God at midnight, and illumined the prison with joy? Do you wonder? You need not; he was above manhood.

Nay, in far harder things he showed the same spirit. When Apollos the eloquent appeared and carried all away, when in his presence Paul, with his thorn in the flesh, seemed even pitiable perhaps, and though he well knew that there were divine gifts in himself to which the light of Apollos was as nothing, though he dared to say to the Christian Church, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,"—yet the high, pure, humble spirit bowed itself, and he never mentions Apollos but with justice and honor, though he reduces both to nothingness before God: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" God is all!

And so I might run on, for every sentence in all his letters is a revelation of character. But perhaps you will ask, Is this a faultless person? No. His fierce impetuosity and keen sense of right remain to the last, and often in excess. Usually the greatest spirits abound in fault, but they are mighty at first in spite of fault, and often impressive through their faults.

When the high priest Ananias "commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth, then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" There he is in the terrible intensity and fire of his nature, yet flaming too high. And of another he says, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works." Ah, Paul! the Christian mercy

was for the moment lost under the old Hebrew justice.

But enough as to his character. I proposed to speak next of the peculiar influence this apostle has exerted upon the world,—not merely in shaping the creeds of all the churches now extant, which he did,—but in his personal influence, working toward Rome, in Rome, and through Rome, he (and not St. Peter) is the direct and chief father of Christianity, ancient and modern.

I wish to offer a tribute of tender sympathy and heartfelt homage to the memory of the noble Paul, and to commend this excellence to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

I have often said that every man is as his admirations are. I judge not a man's will, but I judge his heart by the things he at the bottom really admires. The man's will may be weak; he may be led away, and be too feeble to act out his ideals in his own life; but if there be a depth of appreciation of what is truly high, there is always hope that it will come to govern him in spite of all that is against it. There is hope of a tree if there be life in its root, and what the heart worships is the real root of the man. There are two sorts of high nature, of genius: that, first, which produces, which gives us the act, the machine, the book, the grand life; and that, second, which, with all the soul, sees, admires, and loves. If you are not of the first order, are you of the second? I have presented you this noblest ideal of human nature in Paul. I ask, Do you see it, love it, admire it?



I know the common ideals. Some of us perhaps are so low as really to admire nothing higher than the vulgarity of wealth and position and their shows; some go higher and their deepest admiration is for genius or social refinement; while all look up in wonder at a mighty will, at such examples of will-power as are to be found in Plutarch and in the history of war. But there is a world above all this, a world in which all lower gifts, such as the will, are used indeed and transfigured, but in which the peculiarity and centre are in noble affections, generous trusts, divine living. There is the top, the transcendence of humanity, and that is Paul, that is Christianity. You may have every thing else, but until you have this, you want. You are below your highest nature. But if you have it not, does it even look the most desirable to your soul? Paul's fulness of heart toward the highest, Christ, God, and mankind,—is that the best you know of? If it is not so to you, ask why, correct the follies of your thinking, penetrate into the reality, strip off mean prejudices, drop the names and delusions which conceal the fact, and answer me, Is not Paul at the top? What is beyond him? Did he not worship the perfect shape of excellence? He was made up of gratitude, of adoration of the best, of sacrifices of self through and through, of a heart turning on every side with something finer than justice and honor and magnanimity; and is not this soul purified as the diamond, and lit with heavenly light? Is it not virtue, glory, immortality?

St. Paul passed the last two years of his life in Rome. I have stood on the spot at Puteoli where he stepped from the Mediterranean on the Italian shore. He travelled to Rome by the Appian Road, and at Appii Forum and the Three Taverns he met the friends who had come to greet him; and there he characteristically "thanked God and took courage." Many of you have travelled that way by which he entered Rome, along a road which then for perhaps twelve miles was lined on both sides by tombs, some of them dating back toward the foundation of the city. He passed through that long cemetery, and on the road through whose narrow defile Roman armies had long departed for conquest and returned in triumph. I know not his thoughts as he passed this way and entered the centre of the world, which was to him the centre of the powers of darkness. Many of you have been near, though no man knows the spot where, in "his own hired house," he for two years preached "with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Think of it,—Paul there, carrying in himself the heavenly civilization, not of to-day merely, but of a day most distant yet, of the perfection of man, and speaking out boldly the truths of that civilization in the centre of Rome, in the centre of old power and corruption and blood, announcing the dawn of a new day to the whole earth! What a moment was that, though no one saw it,—the empire of Christ beginning to speak through one poor Jew at the centre of the empire of arms, the Roman

eagles standing there, old with conquest and carnage, and near them, "in a hired house," the Dove of Peace announcing the eternal conquests of spirit !

To close the history : I have stood on the spot where, according to tradition, Paul the aged was martyred, where that wonderful spirit, passing through mortal agonies, was yielded up to God. Through him and through his blood modern history is modern history, America is America, we here to-day are here to-day. Through him worship goes on this morning through the churches of Europe and of this vast Western World. A life not wasted,—a life spilt upon the ground, but its perfume, like his Master's, filling the world.

In a few months or years our lives will close, not violently perhaps, not painfully perhaps, but the death of every human being is a natural tragedy, almost equal to a martyrdom. Shall it all be wasted, the world be left as it was ? or shall we, not wasting our costly lives or our costly death, scatter seed which will spring up and bear abundantly ?

## PAUL AND BARNABAS.

And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas : Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with him John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other : and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.—ACTS xv., 36–39.

TWO men, Barnabas and Paul, had been commissioned as extra or missionary apostles, to do the work outside, "in the regions beyond." They had gone on together, but now Paul at the first moment of pause characteristically says, "Come, let us turn back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they fare." This wise master-builder Paul would see to his building ; this tender father would watch the steps of his young ; and this man who always stood as if a-tiptoe on the tops of the mountains and reached out to the parts beyond, yet turned and looked backward, desiring the new while yearning toward the old,—a man who let nothing perish that he had planted. "Come, let us turn back,"—which is, as I think, a picture of the best human heart,—a picture also of that best wisdom which in all advance clings tenderly to what is behind, the true conservatism of progress,—

and a picture especially of all true education, all true colonization, all true evangelization, which always secures what it has gained.

“Come, let us turn back.” When he could not turn back he sent messages of love and care and warning, saying to one little plantation (the church of the Thesalonians), “But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored to see your face with great desire. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye?”—saying again, “Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith,”—his heart ever torn, you see, between those he had left and those to whom he would go.

Now in the case before us Barnabas agreed to go back with Paul on one of these visits of the heart, determining, however, to take with them John whose surname was Mark. “But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who turned back,” etc. “And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.” So you see a quarrel! This is a painful shock,—these two great Christians announcing, to an earth colored with blood, the peaceful Lamb, and themselves in a quarrel! Painful on many accounts. First, because of their connection. Up to this point they had been noble yoke-fellows, twin apostles, selected by the Holy Ghost and by common consent, enduring and conquering together; side by side at Lystra when

the mob "brought oxen and garlands, and would have done sacrifice" to them, hailing them as the Jupiter and Mercury of the new religion ; side by side when stoned by the same fickle mob ; always side by side,—and *now !*

Besides, these men themselves were so like,—in every thing the same spirit and temper. Of the first great names of the Christian church these two stand as stars together,—the widest-hearted Jews, after Stephen,—the first to break open the Jewish gates, and bring religion out to man, wherever they could find him,—so like and so equal. The after-eminence of Paul, the extraordinary richness of his inspiration, and his power of advance have made the Christian world forget the high claims of Barnabas ; but his was a heart, though somewhat less strong, yet not less wise, open, and generous than Paul's. For example, as to its openess : At the first breaking through of Christ's kingdom out of Jewry into the open field of the world, when tidings came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem that the Gentiles in Antioch had received the word of God, Barnabas was sent to oversee the matter. And what did he ? Did he scruple and haggle about terms, or stand back, or look doubtful ? "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, *was glad*, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

I could speak much of this trait in the character of Barnabas. It seems to have been understood and

appreciated by the narrator St. Luke, for he breaks forth here in a very unusual manner: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." In fact Paul and he showed the same spirit all through. Not merely was Barnabas as wide as Paul, but he seems to have been almost as bold. When the Jews, you remember, would not submit to the outrage of having a Messiah for the world, of levelling themselves to the Gentiles, and looked at the new converts with malignity, and contradicted and blasphemed, as was their way, then Barnabas, not less than Paul, "waxed bold, and said: It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, *we turn to the Gentiles.*" There is as much power and will in that sentence as in any word of Scripture. It is granite.

These were brothers, I say, in the Spirit of Christ, both "filled with the Holy Ghost,"—that is, up to the brim with every sort of divine spirit. Yet they quarrel! It seems shocking, but especially so, I think, on the side of Paul. Why? Because Barnabas was his benefactor. He was deeply in debt to Barnabas for aid on two vital occasions at least.

The first was when Barnabas took him, the freshly converted persecutor, the suspected and dreaded enemy, known only as one "breathing out threatenings and slaughter,"—"Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles." It was one of those moments in a man's

career never to be forgotten, especially by one teeming and trembling with every susceptibility, as Saul. Listen: "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

There are times when one man can do much for another,—can indeed save him or destroy him. Perhaps this was an instance. Barnabas had faith in the man before him, believed the tale, felt for the strange, wondrous being as he looked at him, admired his boldness, discerned him, declared for him—whoever else might doubt, took him, introduced him, and answered for him. If we knew nothing else of Barnabas than this, our hearts should turn to him forever. "He took him." So few will take anybody who is down and lift him,—so few have any eye or heart for such an occasion; and I believe, in view of the vast gulf which was about to open between the Christianity of Paul and that of the older apostles, had there been now (and afterward for several years) no bridge, no mediating heart, no Barnabas, Christianity would have broken in the middle. Two events, speaking historically, saved Christianity,—the vision of Peter, picturing the cleanness of all men, and this mediation of Barnabas between the Jewish apostles and the new apostle to the Gentiles.



This is one instance of the friendliness of Barnabas to his brother Paul. There is another. Paul had retired to Tarsus, where we hear nothing of him, and where he seems lost. Certainly he had not his true work or his true place. It was Barnabas again who rescued him. For when Barnabas had discerned the wide movement beginning at Antioch, which was to be the seat of the first Gentile church, what did he? He said to himself, "Saul is the man for this place." "Then departed Barnabas for to seek Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch." He knew who the right man was; and that was next to being the right man himself.

Here began the apostleship to the Gentiles,—here began the gift of Christ to the nations,—here began Europe, America, you and I. And this direction of events, this modification of history, was very much because Barnabas knew the right man, and generally gave the right man the right place,—a very broad hint to all men as to the same high duty. Paul no doubt would have worked alone, in a different line; but had he had no harmony, through Barnabas, with the former apostles, his isolation might have made his work powerless, might early have broken his spirit, and would certainly have left on the earth a Christianity divided and inharmonious. Even as it was, recognized as Paul was, he never was allowed to be at ease; yet without such a recognition and sphere I know not what might have become of him or of the unity of the Church.

We see, then, what Paul owed to Barnabas, and what we owe to him,—and all through his insight, his noble pitifulness, his fearlessness which defied prejudice, his forgetfulness of self, and his discernment and love of real goodness though under a new and uncouth form.

After all this, we are prepared to see how shocking a quarrel this was,—between these men who had been sharing the same work, united in the fellowship of like souls, united by benefits on the one hand and gratitude on the other ! But one feels most shocked, I think, as to Paul,—that he could for a moment have forgotten the past.

Here, however, let us pause. To be sure, it was a quarrel, and a sharp one : “ And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.” Very real ; but let us not be shocked, for I am only surprised that their concord was so great. If we think what Paul was,—naturally imperial, nay imperative, and at times imperious, mixing a terrible Jewish severity with Christian tenderness ; if we consider that through his superior soul and moral spring Barnabas, who started first and was foremost, was gradually subordinated to Paul (a trying thing to the best man) ; if we consider how numerous and constant were the causes for difference of opinion,—above all, the natural intensity of these Jewish minds,—the wonder is that they harmonized at all. We fix our eyes on the one quarrel, and forget the almost miraculous harmony which had gone before.

As to the quarrel itself, we must remember that there are very mean quarrels and very noble ones. Two sorts of people read this narrative,—one excellent, learned perhaps, but foolish, such as commentators who say there was no quarrel. But there was a quarrel. Another sort—those who judge every thing after their own littleness, such as modern critics and carpers at the Bible, who say, “Not only a quarrel, but a mean one, a petty difference of feeling.” We judge such men basely if we judge them in this way. “We do them wrong, being so majestic, to offer them the show of violence.”

The simple account of the matter I take to be this: John Mark, as to whom the dispute arose, was a kinsman of Barnabas, and so, though Mark had failed once (he “departed from them, and went not with them to the work”), yet Barnabas, influenced by personal kindness, felt that Mark ought to be tried again. He viewed him with pity and a human clinging, there was such a clemency in Barnabas, the “Son of Consolation.” But Paul wanted no such man where good work might be spoiled. So each of them, animated by fine but different feelings,—no wrong in either of their hearts, but only a difference,—Barnabas touched with relenting toward the man, Paul filled with jealousy as to the cause, each insisting strongly (as became him) on his own view,—there was nothing left them but to part, as they wisely did. Their feelings no doubt rose to temper, and that was bad, but that was transient. The quarrel, as to the heart of

it, was like the men themselves,—nobly founded ; and at the Judgment Day, though there will be something to condemn, I doubt not there will be more to approve. The commentators drop a tear and say, “Human infirmity.” I will do no such thing. I like the quarrel, as to the heart of it. A mere indignant difference, for honorable reasons, marks no infirmity. Nay, men who have no manhood to take any position for any thing will call their tameness Christianity. But Christianity is not of that spirit,—it is not a mere mush of concession. Where there is great vitality of character, it will, it must, at some times become excessive ; and there is only one sort of nature—namely, the purely mild and somewhat negative—which can claim the look of being faultless.

My friends, we are really getting to love nothing sufficiently well to quarrel about it, so let us not too readily judge the infirmities of such men and such times as those were. If any man is disposed to sneer, let him first have but a touch of the Christian affection of Barnabas for his friend Mark, or but a touch of the divine enthusiasm of Paul for Christ, for souls perishing,—an enthusiasm which could hardly tolerate for a moment weak and wavering men, and to which the cause was all ! Let the sneerer feel what it is to quarrel for such a reason, before he sits in judgment.

But of what consequence is all this to us ? Of much consequence in many ways. I have dwelt upon the character and actions of two of the choicest spirits of

God's redeemed world, and I reckon that merely to catch a glimpse of such natures in their elevations, or even in their faults, is worth more to us than formal repetitions of religious words, or of whole systems of dried-up morals. Of what consequence? Correct judgments are always of consequence,—especially in regard to morals,—that is, it is important to know what to condemn or admire. Besides, it is something to vindicate such men as these were. Their characters are the most precious jewels of history. If they *were* excessive, still even their excesses seem to me more interesting than blameworthy. I am not surprised that such worlds on fire as they were should not conflagrate by ordinary rules and just burn as the domestic fire on the quiet hearth. We must learn to think little of surface irritations—of bursts of mere temperament—when the heart lies below so deep and tender.

I can well believe that the heart of the man who had sharp words with Barnabas was the same heart which poured out that hymn to Love: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal,"—essentially the same heart at this very moment as when he wrote, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This love was as if hidden for a moment under the impassioned indignation of a higher love,—for the *cause*! That was it.

This subject, however, is chiefly significant as indicating to us what is holy and what is unholy war, whether it be as to the quarrels of nations or of individuals. So far as the irritability of mere self made this quarrel, it was unholy war, and so far I expose it to your condemnation ; for the spirit of the Gospel was so far violated in these its apostles. But so far as it was a willingness at any cost, even by the sacrifice of the most sacred ties, and, worst of all, even by a scandal and an "appearance of evil," to stand firm for justice to the cause,—so far the war was holy, even though it rent heaven and earth !

In this may lie instruction for two classes of men. There is one sort of people who are always quarrelling about some selfish thing. Let them take note ; for if there be any thing alien to the Spirit of Christ it is this. If we have this we are not of his Spirit. There is another class of people who will quarrel about nothing. They are as selfishly peaceful as the others are selfishly hostile. They smile over and tolerate and caress any sort of person or any sort of conduct, if it be dangerous to protest. They let a friend suffer, and do not speak the first manly word. They wait to see how all the world goes before they are able to stir. They would let the Lord himself be crucified, and stand far off and say, "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him,"—and all this by a wicked infatuation now prevalent and thought quite Christian. But as

" There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds,"

so I believe there is more of the spirit of Paul in a noble quarrel than in weak concession. O give me the heroic quarrels of Paul a thousand-fold ! There is more of the soul of Christ in them than in a world of that monstrous compound of selfishness and weakness often called moderation. O sacred name abused !

Some one will tell me, " You do not preach the temper of Christ." If I do not, let my words be as wind. But pause one moment. What was that heavenly temper ? Its highest expression was, " Resist not evil." He was the " Lamb of God," the " Prince of Peace." He was here to overcome evil, not by resistance, but by forbearance and suffering. And the might of that is not yet realized. But no man understands the Spirit of Christ who does not know that like all profoundest wisdom it is not one thing, but two things ; it is made up of opposites. Listen : Who in spiritual freedom was so great as he ? Yet who so obedient to rule ? " Ye tithe mint and anise and cummin " ; " Yet whosoever shall break one of these least commandments " ; " These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Again : " He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her " ; and to the erring woman herself, " Neither do I condemn thee," but " go, and sin no more." Again : " He that is not with us is against us,"—a law of the church, taken alone, narrow, tyrannical, hostile ; but here is something else : " He that is not against us is for us."

But, at the close of all, it is of consequence to learn

here that though we look up to these great apostles and leaders, as to mountains, we must look beyond them to the Master, Christ, who knew how to be mighty for all righteousness, but was as gentle as the dawning day, as pitiful as mothers, forgiving until seventy times seven. Here, and always, to him we turn,—turn from ourselves, from apostles,—to learn anew the spirit we are of. And when we have done our best, to him we must turn in our mistakes and weaknesses and sins, asking him to pardon what his pure eyes see amiss, to wash us and make us clean in his own blood, and in his own Spirit of forbearance and love.

“ The best of what we do and are,  
Just God forgive ! ”



## PAUL AT ATHENS.

And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens.—ACTS xvii., 15.

PAUL came to Athens, not by design, but as if casually. It is remarkable that he should have been so near to this city and not have sought it out, for it was still the intellectual centre of the earth. Perhaps it was in some degree from shame at the thought of presenting his ignominious faith to the keen and scoffing wits of the Athenians; for even the most heroic spirits have shrunk before the piercing scoff. But though Paul's spirit was tender and sensitive, yet it seemed capable of hardening into iron through the intensity of his convictions, and where duty called, the spirit lifted him into a natural supremacy over every form of shame. It was he who said, "I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also."

I presume, then, that he was deterred from going chiefly by a feeling that the soil at Athens was too hard and polished for the seed of truth to enter. We know that at Thessalonica and Corinth and everywhere else it had or would have a better reception. His determination was increased, no doubt, by the feeling that he was subjecting the truth and himself to needless contempt by making the trial. Though he was "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," yet his soul felt keenly—every-

thing shows it—the woundings of contempt cast upon that holy thing, and where he could avoid it he did avoid it.

It was casually, then, that he came to do what he did not intend. In fact, to save him from the malice of the Jews of Thessalonica his friends brought him to Athens. It was scarcely an act of his own. And now that he was on the spot he seemed still to have no intention to say a word, and apparently would have gone away in silence. But while he was waiting, expecting his companions to join him, he took the full impression of the scene. Generally he, like all earnest men absorbed in matters of the soul, walked in strange lands and scenes as if in a dream; but waiting there, the full force of the scene came upon him, "his spirit was stirred in him." What a stir to his soul! A man who not only had, as we say, the doctrine of the one God, but who lived in the presence and intimacy of the one God, and to see what he saw! He was in a "paroxysm." Anger, grief, shame, pierced him "when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry,"—"idol-full,"—"full or crowded with idols." True, he had been accustomed to cities filled with idolatry; for this was a period when superstition met the eye and ear in all the places and all the concerns of life; but this city was something peculiar. It was as if the vast and splendid mythology of the Greeks had here bloomed into marble, so that he felt as if he had come up into the very home of the gods, into a city which, as some one

says, "had more gods than men," or where "you could find a god easier than a man."

So, in a paroxysm of feeling, he went out into the market-place, the Agora, the forum, the public square. There, amid the plane-trees planted by Cimon, surrounded by statues of demi-gods and illustrious Greeks, such as Solon, and Conon the admiral, and Demosthenes, he opened his Gospel to the Greeks. And this he did daily.

"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say?"—this mean fellow, this beggarly gatherer of scraps, this idle smatterer. "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." But though they saw much to despise and laugh at, after all there was something of interest about him. The subjects he spoke of, the gleams of heavenly light, the manner of the man, provoked and yet disappointed the Greek mind. So "they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus." Areopagus, the ancient and dread tribunal of justice, was on Mars' Hill. The sanctuary of the Eumenides, or Furies, was immediately below the feet of the judges,—penalty under justice. Opposite and before him rose the steep Acropolis, adorned with architectural splendors, the Parthenon of Minerva crowning the summit. There also, "towering from its pedestal on the rock of the Acropolis, was the bronze colossus of Minerva, armed with spear, shield, and helmet as the

champion of Athens." Around on every side were the altars and gods of Greece. Then Paul, so surrounded, "stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said: Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious."

This picture presents, it seems to me, a contrast most marked,—the contrast, I mean, between Paul and the Athenians. That divine Being who, as I think, delights in teaching by contrasts, has here given us one of those historical pictures so full of meaning to the people who have eyes. Before us at the first look stands a Jew, one of a race quite out of the nobility of the world, peculiar, and disagreeable to the nations,—a Jew, and not such a Jew as sometimes is seen to tower and bloom out of that people; not a tall and princely presence, but a person perhaps of the lower Jewish type and any thing but imposing; and he is talking in broken Greek, with a strong Hebrew tinge, and to every man he meets he talks with an intemperate and almost diseased earnestness, all unlike the gay and easy and instinctively tasteful Athenians,—talking and reasoning about the resurrection and such absurd things!

Such a figure would not have been very much marked in many parts of the Roman provinces; but here he stands in Athens, "without form or comeliness," in the midst of the city and children of Apollo! No wonder they, the scholars of the Porch and Grove, scorned the "babbler," the half-ignorant retailer of scraps of truth;

no wonder they treated him with polished mockery, and said, politely condescending, "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?" Their treatment of him was just as if some half-good-natured people were to take a strange enthusiast from the streets of a metropolis into the public square, to hear him,—at once satisfying their curiosity and enacting a scene of solemn badinage.

But there is another side to this matter, the inside. We will look there. In the progress of all real cultivation the lower gradually sinks before, gives way to the higher. The life of mere materialism, however rich it seems, gives way to the superiorities of taste; the glaring colors and gewgaws of the savage are conquered by the sobriety of a cultivated feeling. Then again the mere rude valor and power of the primitive man sink below the authority and dignity of prudence and the wisdom of government, as we see in Rome. Or, higher yet, even at the moment of which I speak, Greece, though degraded into a mere province, was still supreme in the order of intellectual life, and to her, Rome and the world still looked, and to her, the flower of Roman youth came for education and higher light. This was the last great advance, then, in the gradual subordination of the lower to the higher. But there is another advance still, another superiority of far different reach, where genius itself sinks to nothing before the supremacy and glory of the soul,—where the heavenly heart takes rightfully the

highest throne. That last advance, that last superiority, was first announced to the whole earth in the person of this "babbler" Paul. And as he stood there, in spite of the outside contrast against him, if we are attentive we shall see his superiority,—a superiority not only to that highly civilized people, but to merely civilized people at all times, now as well as then. We can see it in all essential particulars. While, for example, that splendid Greek race polished the surface of life, this man was always at work to shape and vitalize the spirit; and as to their endless gossip about some new thing in art, or fashion, or affairs, he expected no new thing of that sort, and was refreshed by no good news but the good news of the Gospel of the kingdom.

This superiority of his interests means much. The height of men or nations is exactly measured by what most deeply interests them. Now the enthusiasm of the Athenians at its best was for a finer design in art or for a newer thought; nothing excited their horror in a greater degree than a discord in music or in a poem, or the inferior attitude and expression of a statue. But Paul's horror was aroused by a discord in the soul. He beheld man, the image and statue of God, deformed;—and he was in a paroxysm.

Or look, if you will, at the superiority of his manhood. That superiority, in a Christian, will seem surprising to some. But this person before you, O Athenians, though he looks so much below you, is perhaps the only man

among you. He is humane. He accommodates himself to you all he can, but at the same time he has the manhood of courage. He speaks out the truth where speaking is offensive and dangerous; he does not keep his unpopular convictions out of sight. He is alone in Athens, but he is not frightened out of his duty. You Athenians had ancestors at Marathon and Salamis who in a rude way were men, and Rome had many of the same sort; but take into consideration the motive of the courage, the quality of it, what sort of enemies it overcomes, and where among the heroes of your best age is there a spirit like this, which, without defiance and without flinching, and bearing his cause in his single hand, meets the shock of Athens, of Rome, of the world itself? "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself."

Eighteen hundred years of Christianity have passed, and I am ashamed to say that Paul seems as superior to the men of this day as of that, in the quality of his courage. And as to refinement,—you refined Athenians can mock, but when he comes to speak to you, the consummate art of his address is as great as yours, but is almost lost in the consummate benignity which is breathed through the whole.

But I can not go on with so profound a contrast as was shown by this representative of the civilization of God as he stood there belittling the grandeur of Greece. I know what the scholar feels. I know a little of the

sublime things of the Greek history. I see your temples and statues gleaming through groves in the moonlight, I feel the exquisite grace of your Greek souls which made all this. But what then? What of the stature and beauty of your souls? What of the holiness and depth of your hearts? What of purity and tenderness and mercy? Who is your God? Is it Venus and Jove? or is it the God whose face is seen in Jesus Christ? Ah! the poor Hebrew Paul seems to me a god among you.

My friends, has it ever occurred to you to ask what is the stuff of our greatness? How does it look along-side of his? The Greek greatness, that of Rome, of London, of Paris,—the greatness of comfort, of upholstery, of taste, of ancestry,—the greatness even of thought, of will,—what are they? Smoke out of the chimney. I see them; I do not see them. But the heart, the divine heart, Christ in me, self underfoot, justice, humility, love, the love which makes deep and tender hearts, faith,—that is, the invisible full in view,—this spirit, even in its lower measures, even when fouled and perverted, is better than all the grandeurs of mind and sense. Better! Do I say better? As much higher as mind is higher than matter. The gleanings of Ephraim are finer than “the vintage of Abiezer.” And when this spirit breaks into its full radiance, as it sometimes does, it is a light which darkens sun and moon, and will hereafter make even the heavens resplendent. And this spirit is given to the simplest child who in sincerity obeys and trusts and loves Jesus Christ the Lord.



## GALLIO.

But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it ; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment-seat.—ACTS xviii., 15, 16.

THIS was the decision of Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, in the great matter of dispute between the Jews and the new Christian faith. Paul had now dwelt eighteen months at the prosperous city of Corinth in Achaia, "reasoning in the synagogue every sabbath and persuading the Jews and the Greeks." He did not separate from the Jews or put himself in a hostile position toward them, but rather joined himself with them as far as he could, that he might quietly and by the cords of reason and love draw them to him,—which you will notice as a fine though little practised principle of Christian wisdom. But they were hard to persuade. Their neck was an iron sinew. At last Paul was "pressed in spirit" ; the ardor of his purpose would bear no longer these slower ways ; so he testified to the Jews, openly and emphatically, and I suppose with authority, that Jesus was Christ. Then commenced an open division. Paul and the Christian disciples no longer frequented the Jewish synagogues, but formed themselves into a separate community. But the envy and malignity of the Jews

could not long bear the sight of a religion set up in open and prosperous opposition to theirs. So, at the time when Gallio was governor, they rose as one man, broke out into insurrection, and brought Paul before the judgment-seat. Their accusation against him was, "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." Paul, in his usual calm, yet bold and invincible spirit, was about to answer, when Gallio interrupted and said to the Jews: "If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you ; but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it ; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment-seat."

There is in all this narrative much which is worthy of your thought ; but it is only to the reply of Gallio that I wish you to attend :—" If, Jews, you had brought before me something of a *substantive* sort—a matter of real right or wrong,—I would give it my attention ; but questions of words and names, and of your law,—these superstitious frivolities I can have nothing to do with." " And he drave them from the judgment-seat."

This Gallio was an elder brother of Seneca ; who, if we except Cicero and Marcus Antoninus, was the most illustrious moralist of Roman antiquity. In him—I mean in Seneca—was carried to a high pitch whatever was beautiful or sublime in the moral aspirations of the heathen world. Gallio was a man of much the same cul-

ture and perhaps of a finer heart. Indeed, so remarkable was he for a certain mildness and gentleness of temper, that a Latin writer of that period calls him "*dulcem Gallionem*"; and his brother Seneca says of him (in an exaggerated spirit, no doubt), "Of all mortals there is no one so sweet to any one as Gallio is to all."

Now, that a man of this character should refuse even to listen to the question whether Christianity was true or false, is a fact which it may be instructive for us to reflect upon. It may indeed appear at first sight that Gallio, in driving away the Jews and their accusations against Paul, was but acting the part of a wise magistrate who saw that the disturbance arose from the mere malignity of the accusers. This may be true; and, if it is so, in this aspect of his conduct Gallio was as noble a heathen as ever sat in judgment upon the interests of Christ's persecuted people. But I am inclined to think that his course on this occasion was dictated by a calm Roman indifference as to a matter that he judged to be out of his jurisdiction; or perhaps rather by a contempt for the Jews, and all that concerned them, than by consideration for the interests of the persecuted. For we see that immediately after, when the enemies of the Jews proceeded to illegal violence against them, and "took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat," Gallio "cared for none of those things." Now, if his conduct had proceeded from principle, he

would not have suffered this violence to be done to the Jews any more than by them. It was therefore careless contempt.

But whether this view does him justice as a judge or not, his personal relation to this great question between the Jews and Christ certainly may be described as careless indifference. Though by his own confession he knew that Paul preached nothing that was a matter of "wrong or wicked lewdness," and that the religion he was attempting to introduce bore at least all the marks of sincerity and inoffensiveness, he yet, it would appear, dismissed the whole matter from his private reflections as soon as his public duty in regard to it was finished. Herein he exhibited but the tendency which belongs to men in business or office of any nature to separate the whole of it, whatever may be its moral significance, from any private relation to themselves. A merchant, a professional man, or a man in place rarely carries into his public work his whole private self: he leaves something of his heart, something of his home principles, behind him, and habitually puts on another self, and daily endues himself with the spirit and maxims which have come to mark his public occupation. So, also, when he has disposed of a matter in his public capacity, he usually puts it off as he would a business dress, and rarely carries it back into privacy, to ask himself whether it has nothing to teach him or warn him as a man. Gallio disposes of the question of Christianity on the principles of his

office as Deputy of Achaia, and so has done with it ; but had the question of Christianity nothing to do with Gallio as a man, as an immortal soul ?

Now, in the first place, Gallio, we may suppose, refused to think of this matter at all, because it arose from a quarter against which he was prejudiced, and in part justly. The Jews !—what had the refined Roman moralist to do with a question of their superstitions ? Interesting would have been to him all philosophical questions as to the nature of the gods and of duty ; but any thing of this sort, coming from that quarter, was purely vulgar. Here before him, in the person of Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, stood the spirit that God had commissioned to give life and immortality to the world. Here in this soul of Paul was set up the light of the Eternal Spirit, which was to illuminate the farthest ages, and, like the burning pillar of cloud, to lead the whole race in the way to eternity. Yet Gallio had no question to ask,—no wisdom, no life, to seek. He felt, yet he was not a conceited man,—he felt like a god in the midst of these poor Jews, looking down on their religious squabbles (for that is just the word), and would as soon have thought of going to his own slaves to learn the arts of war or government, as to Paul and these Jews to learn his religion.

The lesson here is that pride and the prejudices of pride were not made for man. Gallio's mistake is repeated every day,—is repeated by hearts here. Culti-

vated men in the pride of their culture, uncultivated men in the pride of their crudest notions, do now—so late as this—look down upon Christianity and say in their hearts, “Can any good thing come out of this Nazareth?” Some things about Christianity are obviously so distasteful and unreasonable that they will not even investigate, but drive the question from their judgment-seat. Remember that in a rough Jewish garment, arraigned as a seditious fellow, there stood before Gallio a man of small, unpretending, perhaps repulsive figure, who was brought in and sent out, and who did not even open his lips. Remember that this figure was the representative of God in the world, and that if, viewing things after the sight of the eyes, you sit in your proud prejudices to judge religion without a hearing, you will find it to look now as it looked then; but that if you wait, if you allow it to speak, if you hear as a reasonable creature, its voice will fill your soul with the unspeakable things of divine truth, and bring you down from your cynical judgment-seat to be a suppliant at its footstool.

But again: I suppose it was not merely prejudice against any thing Jewish which made Gallio careless, but the prejudice which as a high and philosophical believer in some great truths of natural religion he had against all popular beliefs, as superstitious and frivolous.

Observe in the next place (and this is of the most practical consequence to us) the superior importance which Gallio attached to morals as distinguished from religion.

“ If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment-seat.” That is, if it were something of substance,—something of wrong done or good prevented between man and man,—this amiable Gallio would attend to it. To heal an injury, to right “a matter of wrong and wicked lewdness,” was the part of a humane and wise man. But if it be a question of popular religious faith,—as to that he can make no inquiries. That is not a matter of substance, but the mere vague, obscure, and frivolous surplusage with which the weakness of the common heart surrounds the great idea of duty,—surrounds and conceals it. “ If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.”

Now Gallio in this is a representative of a feeling common enough among a class of very good men. They find religion to be a mass of thoughts and names of which they have no distinct conception; they find the world divided into large and opposing bodies, on account of some distinction which is minute and empty of substance; they find the great instincts of their hearts unappealed to,—little living connection established between religion and their own deepest feelings; so they either openly think or tacitly feel that all this is superfluous; or they at least feel nearer to the few plain duties of human-

ity than to religion, and inwardly, though perhaps unconsciously, recognize this as the true religion of their hearts. To such I have to say to-day with all respect: "My friends, you are committing a great error, and the more lamentable because it proceeds in part from what is true and good in you. There is a theological spirit found in some measure in all churches, and the bane of all, which, in the discussion and contests of dogma, or in the exaggeration of what is subordinate, or in the endless discriminations of doctrines even to their last fibres, or in the unmeaning repetition of theological phrases,—in this dry play of the mind,—forgets, leaves out, the few simple but sunlike ideas which bind man to his God, to his Saviour, and to his fellows. I am sorry that the error of the churches should be an occasion of stumbling, but let not such an error work a fatal injury. Will you be satisfied with common honesty and common humanity? Are you content practically to set aside religion? Is all this uninteresting and unnecessary? What then is religion? Listen to the theology which you despise. There is a God. I am his creature. By his breath I breathe. There is an eternity. I shall not die but live—I—eternally be,—eternally reap what I have sown, eternally be noble or base, pure or impure, honored or dishonored. Gracious God! can this be? If so, I am too weak, too corrupted, to let the issues of such an eternity hang upon what I am,—frail creature of the moment! Wherewith shall *I* appear before God? I am



gone far astray. But there is a message of mercy, even to salvation. Redeemed by that mercy,—my spiritual life instigated and supported by that mercy,—henceforth I begin a new career; henceforth there is for me, at my side, in my heart, One whom the world hath not seen nor known,—the all-blessed, all-peaceful, all-living Spirit of God; and he shall be to me the hand to lead, the life to sustain, and at last will bring me into a future too divine to speak of.”

This is theology. This is the religion which you neglect, setting up in its place, not the noble Christian charity, but a morality of your own. God have pity on the infatuation of the wise and prudent! Our morality,—our decent lives,—our debts paid,—the poor succored somewhat,—religious worship kept up, the church frequented (for this is a useful thing and is a good example),—is this all? Are we now complete? And are we content to sit in this dark hole of the earth, lit only by a farthing taper, while above ground the Sun of righteousness is in the heavens, and it is day,—grand, universal day? Honoring as much as I do all excellence, I believe that the decencies and even excellences of many a man have cheated him out of the surpassing dignity of the sonship of God and the destiny of immortal life. It is highly probable that of the common men of Corinth who pressed into the judgment-hall to hear what Paul would say—nay, it is probable that of the malignant, fiendish Jews who dragged him there—some at least

were born again into the image of God, while the accomplished, decent, nay, *excellent* Gallio, descending from the judgment-seat highly satisfied with his superiority, was denied the transcendent destiny so often awarded to criminals and slaves. He that is nearest to the kingdom of heaven is often in result the farthest from it. That was a strange saying of our Lord, and it almost seems to me that it had something of satire in it: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

If you have done your duty in any respect, thank God you have done so well. You shall not lose the reward of it. But look deeper. See the proud ingratitude which has been unmindful of God. See your blind self-complacency in feeling no need of mercy and salvation, and in effect despising them. Drive these things no longer from your judgment-seat; and remember that, though you now regard them all as a matter of "words and names," they are no less realities for all that. God lives and will live; that I think is a reality. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and will judge the world; that is not a matter of "words." Eternity begins. These things *are*, however we regard them. Though shadows now, "every eye shall see them."

## PAUL BEFORE FELIX.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.—ACTS xxiv., 24, 25.

IT is an account of a sermon of St. Paul's and the effects of it. But before we can rightly understand the account we must know something of the persons before whom Paul stood.

Felix had been a slave, but afterward became a freedman of Nero, and was elevated by him to the procuratorship of Judea, and under the title of procurator he was the sole prince of the province. As a ruler he had shown some of the usual Roman virtues, and by the vigor and severity of his administration had reduced to some order the wild and lawless state of a distracted country, so that the orator Tertullus began his address not only prudently but with some truth when he said, "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness." But he was a man of a character unjust, unprincipled, and mercenary. The three words by which his contemporaries describe him are, "cruel, ava-

ricious, licentious." "He exercised," says Tacitus, "in Judea the imperial functions with a mercenary soul"; or, "He exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave." To this add that he was a man of the utmost license.

Drusilla his wife, the youngest daughter of Herod, and the sister of Agrippa, was a strikingly beautiful woman, but as profligate as beautiful. She was now living as the wife of Felix, though to marry him she had left her own husband, the King of Emesa.

These were the people who sent for Paul to hear him concerning the faith in Christ. The motive for hearing him was chiefly, no doubt, curiosity,—excited perhaps in the mind of Felix by his Jewish wife; for, whatever else a Jew or Jewess might be, there was no indifference to any thing concerning the national faith.

Paul, then, is to preach before high persons. What shall he say? He is to preach before a man and a woman who, while they claim reverence as the rulers of his people, merit detestation for their wickedness. More than this: Paul is a prisoner and is to preach before his judge. What shall he say? On the one side his Lord Jesus has put him in charge of his pure and holy Gospel. To that he must be faithful. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!" This is the responsibility, and yet look at the congregation,—Felix and his wife! Felix the corrupt, hard, relentless Roman judge; Drusilla a proud and shameless woman. This was the audience to hear the Gospel of the Son of God.

Though that scene has so long passed away, it is not very difficult to call it up. At the appointed time, at some season of the day or evening when no other pleasure calls, the Roman sits down in the severe and awful state surrounding a high officer of the Empire. By his side, and lending to him a sort of Oriental magnificence, sits the Jewish princess, shining with every lustre but that of virtue. The centurion brings in his prisoner, Paul, a man small in stature, and marked (at least at first) by a weakness of presence, and in such garb and with such look as strongly contrast with the persons and pomp about him. Now he is here, silence is made, and he is expected to speak, and I ask again, What shall he say?

Two sorts of people will answer me very differently. One class will say, "Surely the decencies of time and place, not to speak of his own safety, will induce him to present as agreeable an aspect as he can of a most disagreeable subject." Another class will say: "Out upon this half-faced way! Paul, if he be Paul, will thunder into the ear of Felix an accusation of all his crimes; will say, 'Thou art the man,—thou, Felix!' And to Drusilla he can say no less than John the Baptist said to her father: 'It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.'"

But Paul's sermon and demeanor, so far as I can judge, would have disappointed both these classes of people. "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judg-

ment to come." In this I see at once the perfection of faithfulness and of discretion,—equally distant from fanaticism and looseness. In the first place what he said seems to have been spoken, not with heat, but with a sort of solemn coolness. "He *reasoned* of righteousness." The weight of such a manner would certainly have been greater than any enthusiastic outburst.

Every sort of earnest speech, indeed, is admirable, and was practised by this greatest of orators, from the fiery outbreak as of escaped lightning, down to the calm and solemn reasoning of righteousness. But when the subject is such as this no manner seems to correspond but that of solemnity and depth. "The gods demand the depth and not the tumult of the soul."

Then again as to the matter: "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." What was said was general in terms; what is called personality, entirely avoided. Observe that he removes his address yet further from a personal air, not only by not speaking of their crimes, but by not speaking directly of crimes at all, but of the opposite virtues. He reasoned not of unrighteousness and intemperance, but of their opposites,—that is, he set before them the virtues they had violated, lifted up the fair images of righteousness and temperance, and then simply pointed to the great fact of a "judgment to come." While he avoided thus all unnecessary offence, mark the sublime faithfulness of the apostle. His audience had come to hear of strange and

curious things. He singled out nothing, as it would appear, but just that which they needed. To the unscrupulous, unjust man, whose hands were filled with bribes, he speaks of righteousness,—that is, justice, honesty, truth ; to the free and unchaste livers he speaks of temperance, chastity ; and to those acting out fearlessly every sin as it arose, yielding to all its caprices, because there was no fear of God before their eyes, he exhibits the dread tribunal of a judgment to come.

Here was a noble, fearless faithfulness. I would we could recall what he said. Reasoning of righteousness, or justice, he showed no doubt the duties of fairness, not only between private men, but particularly on the part of great public officers such as the one before him. He set out, I dare say, the noble image of true justice and public honor. Reasoning of temperance, or self-control, he taught, to be sure, that every natural passion should be bound within sacred limits, that avarice is but an intemperate lust, drawing with it meanness, fraud, oppression, and an inveterate iniquity. Though his eye rested upon Drusilla he did not fear to speak of that chastity which keeps the heart like a temple. In this manner he commended to them the things that were honorable and lovely and of good report ; and thus he burnt as if into their very hearts the deformity of their vices.

Here then was the sermon ; and what now was its effect ? “And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled,” or,

rather, "became alarmed." The Roman style of man was not such as was used to alarm ; still less a Roman ruler before a subject, a Roman magistrate before a culprit, and that culprit a Jew, and that Jew with no arms in his hand, and no threats upon his tongue. What a testimony to the divine power which went with the words of truth uttered by such sincere lips, from such a deeply convinced heart ! and what a testimony to the depths of spiritual life in the souls of all men ! It would seem that if one soul be really alive, it makes all souls live which touch it. Is preaching reduced to dumb show and noise ? and is the age unbelieving ? Let the preacher be a man who knows God and has stood face to face with the invisible facts, and the foolishness of preaching can at any time become as piercing as the point of a sword.

Felix trembled. A torch flashed into the darkness of his heart ; he saw himself ; he heard the authentic voice of God speaking within him as audibly as the trumpet in the silence of Sinai. He caught a glimpse of a judgment to come. Yet there was no one before him but a plain man,—no dread incantation used,—only a few words of truth, a cool, solemn reasoning of righteousness. O the mysteries and depths of our souls ! A heathen, of such a life, an earth-creature, calm and undisturbed until a word, a look of the eye, any thing, at a moment gave a resurrection to the inmost spirit, and revealed as by one glimpse of divine lightning a tribunal, a judge, a criminal, and a penalty to come ! Behold the power of sim-



ple truth on the heart ! What need we of labored evidence and discussion of this and that, when we ourselves by one flash of divine light are compelled, even to the teeth, to recognize truth ? Here we see the meaning of the passage : " And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not ; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

We call these divine glimpses " conscience." Would that the eternal value of such flashes were so felt that whenever they meet us we might pause, keep to them, cling to them, forget all else to remember them, so that their majestic commandment, whatever it be,

" All alone should live  
Within the book and volume of our brain,  
Unmixed with baser matter."

Felix trembled. The imperial judge was judged, was tried in his own tribunal and found wanting. But now mark the result. He " trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." " Depart ! begone ! When there is time I will send for thee." That is, this person in his soul confessed with awe and agitation that Paul had brought a most solemn business to his mind, but bade him break off for the present. " I must attend to some concern of the province, or it is the time of some engagement of pleasure. When the season is more convenient I will call for thee." And so the mysterious

illumination, like a momentary glow in the evening clouds, passed away. Ah, indeed, Felix! and was the chief end for which your God created you, to do something which you call business or to enjoy something which you call pleasure? But such is the history of almost the whole world,—the postponement of the business of heaven, of God, of immortality, to the business and enjoyment of the moment. The solemn supper of life is spread, but one says, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused"; and another has married a wife, and so can not come. Here is the grand infatuation of men; from this folly comes the vastest ruin of immortal spirits. "I see the right and approve it, but I would follow the wrong a little longer. A more convenient season is near." So we let slip the happy moment; the spirit which has risen in the heart sinks down again; the veil is drawn, and the man is all himself once more. Felix dismisses the apostle with trembling, promising himself to look into this matter; but of the very next and all subsequent interviews the narrative says, "He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him."

Mark that. It may have seemed strange to you in reading the account, but only because you did not recollect what the human heart is. The moment of conviction past, the old character, the avaricious soul, resumed

at once its place. The convenient time came, came often after, but it found the man changed, another man. Is this any thing new or amazing? It may be amazing, but not new. I speak to no man who has not had a similar experience in himself. Something arouses conscience,—here, for instance, in this place,—perhaps a glimpse of the love of Christ constrains and for one moment wins the soul; but you will not quite yield; you leave the church; a few hours pass, or days, and I put it to you if the change in your state of mind is not as great as between Felix trembling before Paul and Felix communing with him, hoping that money might be given of him.

Thus once or often near to the kingdom of heaven, we yet sink away from it. The procurator who to-day listens to the reasoning on righteousness and temperance—who to-day is awed at the sight of a judgment to come, and promises that at a more convenient season this shall be attended to—to-morrow negotiates with the apostle for a bribe. For two years he kept Paul a prisoner; and when about to leave the country at the end of his term of office, he, the mean and hard man, “willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.” So he vanishes from us into darkness. The possessor of such a divine faculty, which at one moment was so near to regaining its rightful place in the soul, a creature evidently made for glory and heaven and immortality, and approaching in his course their very confines, has gone off into the darkness, where the imagination wishes not to follow

him. I see in this the precise image of myself, unless now, while the time is, I yield myself every day to the solemn convictions of my soul. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

## PAUL BEFORE FESTUS.

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice : Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said : I am not mad, most noble Festus ; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely ; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him : for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul : Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said : I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.—ACTS xxvi., 24-29.

WE must not suppose that St. Paul before Agrippa and Festus was there strictly on his defence. He had appealed to Cæsar's judgment-seat in respect to the charges against him ; and Agrippa and Festus, as mere inferiors and delegates,—the one of the Jewish and the other of the Roman authority,—had no right to try him. It was chiefly from curiosity, perhaps, that they gave Paul a hearing,—a curiosity, however, which in the mind of King Agrippa seemed mingled with respect and even with some small beginning of belief.

In this interview there are, in respect to Paul, several things well worthy of notice. One is his whole demeanor on this occasion. There is sometimes, no doubt, unmeaning eulogy given to all that Scripture characters say or do ; but it would be difficult to flatter such a person as St. Paul. Without speaking of the general elo-

quence or force of his address before these rulers, let us merely observe his demeanor. Observe the dignity of his mind. In this regal presence every thing he says indicates calmness, perfect possession of his faculties ; and there breathes through the whole the spirit of true refinement and conscious elevation. I am not in the least surprised that he always produced such marked effects wherever he appeared, particularly upon the great ; for expecting to see an ordinary fanatic, and beholding, in fact, a man physically mean, they still found before them a presence greater than their own, and could not but feel that there was here a quality, a spirit, of strange elevation,—more impressive on the very account that the nature of it was new and mysterious. He was evidently the representative of no vulgar superstition. This was clear to any eye, but especially to the eye of a cultivated man.

I said at starting that this persecuted Paul had appealed from the inferior courts to the judgment-seat of Cæsar ; and I may go out of my way to add that, in view of what he was, it was the wisest and grandest step a man could have taken. It was fit that such a person, the ambassador of God on the great errand of immortality, should stand to be tried in the imperial court of the world ; and had the throne been then filled by any thing worthy of the name of man, there was no little hope that the religion of Jesus Christ, if it did not sit down at once on the seat of the Cæsars, yet might at least find shelter by its side.

But to return to the scene before Agrippa. Observe that there was not only in Paul what I have called dignity and an appearance of intense yet calm earnestness, but these in union with that amenity and tact which are usually found in characters of a very different order. The lawyer and chosen orator Tertullus, who in behalf of the Jews had accused him before Felix, shows very poorly by the side of the great apostle, even in respect to the accomplishments of public address ; for between them there was just the difference between professional politeness and that which springs untutored from a wise and refined heart.

Observe also how deep an appearance of honesty or genuineness there must have been in Paul ; for after he had related the most wonderful story of his conversion, Festus—not dreaming of the vulgar supposition of deception in the case—broke out : “ Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad.” He thought he saw a lofty madness in Paul. As to his attributing this to learning, I suppose the common reputation of Paul was that of a very learned Jew, and this, added to the personal impression he made, led the Roman Festus to suppose that some enthusiasm in the religious learning wherein he was so versed had set him wild. “ Much learning doth make thee mad.” How touchingly gentle was Paul’s response : “ I am not mad, most noble Festus ; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” Could refinement and dignity go further ? And faith was the root of all.

Having made these miscellaneous observations, I wish now to fix attention chiefly on the manner in which Festus and Agrippa receive the truth ; for they are in this respect marked representatives, I think, of the two great classes into which the world may be divided. The solemn facts and truths which were laid before Festus, and the deep earnestness of Paul's religious feeling, seem to have produced only one impression on his mind,—that this man was mad ! No matter as to the clearness of the truth itself, or as to the evident honesty and soberness of Paul, the witness of it ; the whole thing was so far outside of his ideas and feelings that he could only account for it as a mere extravagance of religious frenzy. This is the usual and perhaps the true view of the character. Assuming it to be so for the present, I now aver that there is not a congregation assembled to-day in a house of worship anywhere in Christendom which has not among the listeners one Festus or several. Some openly profess such a character, and in terms, and with no better examination than Festus gave, insinuate that the whole or a large part of the facts and duties of Christianity are either untrue or at least not fit for practical men. But apart from this unambiguous class, wherever men or women are found who merely attend upon religion because it is usual and they have been so educated, or wherever there are those to whose daily life it is foreign, with whose hearts it has no point of contact, though they may mechanically submit to it, they all in their actual feelings



declare it to be something chimerical, and, so far as their experience goes, a sort of madness. They are persons of taste and of decorous and even somewhat reverent feelings, and they like very well indeed to see religion drawn out before them once a week,—a sort of serious drama, in which they take their customary part as spectators ; but religion, as a matter of belief, as a matter of feeling and living, is thought to be a chimera. I wish to draw correct delineations. Let me, therefore, modify this one by saying that at times, no doubt, these very persons have a glimmering sense of the reality of religion, or that some of them perhaps to a certain extent habitually think it real,—that is, so far as certain good points of morals are concerned, and a certain vague sense that there is something not earthly in it. With this amount of exception then,—which with many does not last long and with all does not go very far,—with this amount of exception, I say, all the rest—all that is Christianity indeed, peculiarly and appropriately—is shadowy, unknown, disagreeable, even wild. There is that about it which they may respect, for many sorts of mere enthusiasm excite the wonder and even the reverence of mankind. But further than this, religion is in their eyes, as I say, an extravagance. The love for Jesus Christ as the one most adorable, on whom we rest ; the gracious influences of the Spirit, cleansing our corruption,—in short, the reality and importance of all spiritual things, seem a madness.

We can find, then, at any time, enough persons essen-

tially like Festus in character; but, as I before intimated, we may not have conceived this character with entire accuracy. There is some reason to think that this man was more sensible of the truth than he seemed. "And as he spake for himself, Festus cried with a loud voice." This abrupt interruption may indicate an excitement of mind from a sudden flash of the truth, such as would startle but not persuade. You may have noticed that where a disagreeable conviction is suddenly forced upon a man nothing is more natural than a spasmodic repression of it, a wilful and violent closing of the mind. This may have been just the feeling with which the worldly and self-willed Roman broke in upon the startling disclosures of Paul, and "said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself." If this be so, certainly there is no want of like instances. Have the convictions of truth, the appeal of love, the force of duty, never for a moment illumined our minds with a sort of ghastly glare, and do we not remember that we hastened to exclude the disagreeable light, and to slight the matter, and violently to force out the conviction from the mind? I think this not uncommon.

But now, if there be any man like Festus in either portion of his character,—that is, if there be any man who does really feel religion to be an extravagance, or who merely calls out, "Folly, madness," to assure himself,—what can I say to such more kind and more solemn than to assure them, with every term of respectful and affec-

tionate greeting, that the faith of Christ is not madness, but the very words of truth and soberness? And if I could speak in the spirit of that affectionate and serenely confident answer of Paul, I would stand here this day and declare that, whatever else is vain or foolish or wild, the one solemn certainty of all things is Christ and the spirit of his religion, that among all the follies of our hearts this is the only wisdom, that among all the shadows of human life this Gospel is real, is sure as God!

Some of us, then, may learn a lesson from this character of Festus. But there is another figure here,—Agrippa. He appears, at least in this transaction, as a man of ingenuous, teachable temper, and Paul instinctively recognized this. But with it there were the ordinary vacillation and weakness, that want of depth of conviction which marks the mass of minds. I think it was in view of this that Paul, as if by one solemn appeal to force his mind to a decision, addressed him that short, decisive question, “King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets?” adding, as if to entice him on, “I know that thou believest.” But in vain. “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Almost! To think of the divine power of Paul! Agrippa answers, “Almost”; but in that word the whole story of the heart is told,—its unwillingness to make sacrifices, and to grasp at once the truth and all that it brings with it. Hearts like Agrippa’s fill our churches. All of us are almost persuaded; few people, indeed, ever reach further. Almost I am persuaded to be a Christian;

but ah! the difference between *almost* and *altogether*! That difference seems small,—seems at the time like a narrow space which one little step would carry us over. Yet something—we scarcely know what,—some fear, some reluctance, still keeps us back, and the little space has not been passed,—nay, it has widened; and many there are who, being almost over it, yet do not pass it.

I would to God that doubts and distractions were past, and that false loves and old habits were yielded up, that our hearts at once bowed to God and accepted the lead of the Master, Christ.

Let, then, these things not remain almost done; do them. A half-religion has in it little power. “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light.” Let us walk in the light.

If any one thinks that what I have now said is a sort of extravagance, I answer that if Christ is the Son of God, if what he has taught us in the New Testament is true, then there is no other wisdom than this: that we should at once rise to the truth, leave all things, and follow him,—leave all rests to depend upon him, to be not only almost but altogether Christians. This is not madness, but the very utterance of truth and soberness, as the times hereafter shall fully prove. Amen.

## PAUL AT MELITA.

ACTS xxviii., 1-6.

THIS little story has much interest, both as to Paul and as to the barbarians. As to Paul : "And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand." If this little incident stood alone it would be absurd to gather any thing from it ; but when we unite it with the story of the shipwreck going before, and with what else we know of Paul, it seems to be quite in character that he of all the company should be the active, helpful one, ministering beneficently, even in so small a thing as feeding the fire, realizing the poet's fine words :

"Thou noble man, be helpful and good,  
Ever creating the right and the useful."

And as the fire burned, "there came a viper out of the heat." Just as, before, the winds and the waves seemed ravening to destroy him, so now as soon as he has escaped, and feels the heat of the fire and says, "Aha, I am warm," a viper fastens on his hand : and this seems very much the story of his whole Christian life. It is a passage from trouble to trouble, a series of escapes as wonderful as the exigencies. These escapes were made often

through the highest qualities in himself, though his own account always is, "The Lord delivered me." In this case, as the serpent fastened, with promptness and vigor "he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm."

Was this a miracle? It is not necessary to suppose it; and where it is not necessary it is not fit. Besides, if God had lavished in this way miracles for the protection of his servants,—if he had given them a charmed life, shielded and pampered them, we should have had no such men as Paul and the rest. He was saved, I presume, by a fearless promptitude. Had he shrunk, or been a moment paralyzed by fear, the work of that deadly viper would have been done. God's spirit of courage is the best protection of a creature.

This scene was a symbol of much in the experience of Paul; for his life was in one form or another a shaking off of beasts,—especially of that viper, slander, "whose tongue outvenoms all the worms of Nile." He was constantly misunderstood and misrepresented. He was no apostle, they said; they slandered his truth, his character; but he shook off the beasts. And as it is a symbol of Paul's story, so it will go on to be a symbol—too often, alas!—of the story of true virtue "in a naughty world,"—the same story of society and its vipers "fastening" on the noble man, and the same secret shielding of God.

So much as to Paul. But the chief interest is as to these barbarians. Concerning them I remark three

things: their hospitality; their feeling as to divine justice; their feeling as to what is superior in man.

First, their hospitality. "The barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one because of the present rain, and because of the cold." "No little kindness,"—that is, feeling of kinship, consciousness of a common *kind*. This kindness to the unprotected and distressed stranger, this barbarian hospitality, gives perhaps the first glimpse rude man has of his relation to man in general,—that is, not as brother or friend or as one of the tribe, but as man,—the earliest instance of the transfer of sympathy to whatever is human; and in this is the first start and suggestion of the great command, "Do as you would be done by." And though you will say that a general hospitality was forced out by the necessities of a barbarian era, still, whatever produced this virtue, it shines, through the long night of the rude ages when the earth was a habitation of cruelty, like a gleam of moonlight over a waste and dark sea. And though this is a virtue of the early and rude races, you may contrast it sharply with much even now found among civilized men,—for example, with the wreckers on the Cornish coast, Englishmen, plundering the distressed stranger; nay, you may contrast it with the mercy of modern business, even here in America, which, Shylock-like, siezes an advantage from the distress of others, or with the spirit which, if it does not prey on the downfallen, at least turns from them instead of "re-

ceiving them with no little kindness." We, in our modern Christian society, have still left our spots and nests of barbarism,—of a barbarism so devilish that it seems to date away back to some age of monsters far behind the barbarians of Melita.

But in noticing this barbarian hospitality it is my chief purpose to say that it is interesting to trace in it the first rudiment or sketch of the Spirit of Christ and of his full brotherhood, just as we trace the first sketch of the perfect organism of man. For if you enlarge this barbarian hospitality to the distressed stranger,—if you enlarge it up to its ideal,—if you conceive a reception and welcoming of all that is human, not of the stranger only or the distressed, but even of the blood enemy (a case such as that the Lord sketches in his picture of the Good Samaritan, and sketches out of his own heart too),—if you conceive, again, a reception and hospitality to men after the bitterest *personal* wrongs (such as His were),—from that if you rise to a hospitality not only toward the blood enemy, but to the soul enemy; that is, the *sinner*,—a reception which looks even base and foul to the common eye,—“He receiveth sinners, and eateth with them,”—then, further, if you understand this reception also as not meagre, but like that of the Father to the Prodigal,—“He fell on his neck, and kissed him,”—if you make to your thought, I say, a hospitality like this, as wide and vital as the all-embracing air to every creature which enters it,—then you have before you the *hospitality of*



*the heart of Christ* ; and while you can see on the one hand the kinship of the heart to the poor barbarians at Melita, you can see also its sublime remoteness from them. You can thus, in these two pictures of hospitality, contemplate the rudiment and the completed ideal of humanity.

The question for us is, Where are we? Where do we stand on the long line which stretches from this lowest to this highest point? How much nearer to that point of barbarian departure than to this point of arrival? On that line we and all the generations must forever measure ourselves.

Consider next the barbarian sense of a divine justice. "And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, vengeance suffereth not to live." "Folly! superstition!" Yes; but even this feeling was the imperfect sketch of a religion written on their hearts,—the feeling, namely, that there presided somewhere a soul of justice, that it worked out on this scene somehow, and that it relentlessly tracked its victim. This sense of the awfulness of crime, this dread sense of justice in the wildest hearts, is so far from being a folly that from it originally rose the visions of avenging gods and even the beginnings of true religion. The human spirit, to its

honor, feels that wrong must be righted ; and if there are no gods to do this, it will create them ; and if the gods it creates are not sufficient for the office, then Nature herself shall be the justicer, and shoot her revenges even through the tongues of serpents. What indeed were the lightnings and thunderings at Sinai, and the voice, "Thou shalt not kill," but a grander and more authentic echo of the same instinct which saw a divine avenger in the venomous beast fastening on the hand of Paul?

This was the honorable and original feeling of man,—that justice must be uppermost now and here. If there is not justice now and here, nature is immoral. This the Jews felt still more than all others, because they had a far deeper feeling of righteousness. But see its abuse: If Job were smitten, secret sin, his friends assured him, was the cause of it. If a tower fell, the eighteen wretches who were crushed were sinners above all others in Jerusalem. So here as to the serpent: God's serpents like to bite murderers, and so Paul must be a murderer. Thus any unfortunate class—just those who need protection and solace—were just those who were covered with infamy. This was a cruel delusion to be sure. Under a feeling of religion and justice the downfallen were trodden on; the best feelings of the human heart turned black against them; honor and the smile of the gods given to the lucky.

We have an instance of something like this as late as our New England witches. If a poor old wretch is un-

fortunate, ugly, and weird, she must be something worse also,—she must be under the ban of God and given over to the devil. She looks accurst; and consequently must be so. The reasoning was: If there be a God, and this is his world, shall he not show favor to his own? and if any man is smitten, is he not God's enemy? Now this instinct was fine, but the logic was bad, and bad logic has vastly afflicted humanity. Men forced their instincts upon a world where the facts were against them; and so, though the feeling was fine, the result was disastrous; for God will not allow the moral feelings to override facts. It would be well if we took note of this to-day in respect to what we call science. I am no believer in any rash and too daring generalizations of science. The spirit of science in some hands, it seems to me, has become a most unscientific spirit; but, after all, science is generally fact, and fundamental religion is also fact, and I think a much higher fact, so our only business is to accept them both, and to hold them both, unalarmed by statements that they are in conflict. They must be accommodated when they can be, or we must wait until they can be; but in no event would I allow either to override and force down the other, for that is just what the ancient religious world attempted, to its sorrow, in the case before us, when it compelled the natural world to square itself to a certain theory of divine truth, justice, etc. Now just see what Christ did as to this. He acknowledged the scientific fact that fortune often goes

against the best people and in favor of the worst. He did not deny, he did not force the fact, but he explained it by teaching that the clear, full reign of justice is not here, but that it is to come,—not here, but there. So he not only maintained the justice of God, but made it far more complete than it could be if confined to this present world. The circumstances of this world do not allow justice to be full, so he removed its arena to a larger, freer condition beyond, and made all men know that a justice is coming which will flash from the east to the west, and realize every humane longing for redress. So the keen, piercing sense of justice in the bosom of primitive men was not balked: it was enlightened and then gratified. It broke away from the facts of this earthly world into a higher.

Now not in the same way, but in a similar spirit, must the Church accommodate fact with fact. And if, in doing this, fine delusions, moral delusions, poetic delusions, seem broken and scattered for a moment, believe me the truth itself will always bring on something finer still, far more moral, far more beautiful.

But next, and chiefly, take notice of the barbarian feeling that success indicates superiority in a man. Paul “shook off the beast into the fire and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while” (they could not believe their eyes), “and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and

said that he was a god." Why? They felt he was superior to Nature,—to her dark, noxious powers, of which they were awfully afraid. We cannot realize the reign of fear which existed on the earth before knowledge came. Feeble man, knowing not the causes or the limits of the effects around him, feeling that awful unknown phantoms and persons are behind them all, sinks down abject in their presence. If he has some true feelings, as these barbarians had, he thinks of these powers as just; if he is lower, he thinks of them as malignant or blind vengeance; but in either case he trembles and worships,—even if his god is a devil. So these barbarians, seeing a man superior to these black powers (of which the viper with its venom was one of the forms), are sure at once that he is a god.

There was something of right feeling in this; for to shake with ease the serpents of the world into the fire, or to strangle them in one's cradle as Hercules did, shows not only power, but righteous power; and so far there was something not altogether false in their idea of Paul. The good and great men of the world, who have sincerely and successfully fought against the evil in it,—against serpents,—they, though by no means gods, are the sons of God and partakers of the divine nature. Though there was a shadow, then, of right discernment, I presume it was but a shadow. For all barbarians are, in the main, worshippers of force,—of the strongest,—of the most successful. The worship of the strongest is in

fact the most universal worship. Indeed, essentially there are but two religions,—the worship of the good and the worship of the powerful,—the worship of the divine and the worship of merely natural gifts and powers. You may divide, I say, all worshippers into two classes,—those who say, “A god,” only when they feel the presence of the holy, the just, the merciful, and those barbarians of every description who say, “A god,” only when they see mere power; and it is just as true of our false social reverence,—the worship of every-day life. A king on his throne, a declared majority, a popular author, a lucky man of business, or whatever has the upper hand becomes gilded to the eye; and a certain class look up to it with all the worship that is in them. If Satan, in that revolt of his, had been successful, if accident had carried him and all his immoralities up to the Throne, he would have looked as regal to such people as the true Possessor.

Do you want examples? Look at these barbarians worshipping Paul; or look at the priest of Jupiter, and the civilized idolaters of Lystra, bringing oxen and garlands to do sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul because they could work wonders; or look at the people who, when they saw the wretch Herod sit upon a glittering throne and make an oration to the people, thought that this—power, gift, speech, royal robes—was the top of all things, and cried, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.”

From this, traverse in thought the ascent to Him who took up all things and cast them down,—who passed upward unawed through “all that is called God,” and found nothing divine but the Fatherhood at the centre. Are we like him? Nay, look at us all. What sort of God have we? Is it a magnificent emperor in the distance, whom we are afraid of or bow to because of the dazzle of power? Or is it “Our Father which art in heaven”? Then, also, what sort of superiority around us do we worship?—the accidental man?—the things of fortune? “No,” you say; “these old superstitions are all gone.” You are wrong. So far from that, I scarcely know a man or a woman not infected by them in some shape. The imagination with all its illusions is for every thing that is up, and against every thing that is down. Lord Bacon, you know, draws out a long list of mental idols which disturb correct thinking. But I know no such disturber of our moral thought as the idol of the accidental,—that is, good or bad fortune of some sort. Who can think correctly about any one who is under a blaze of success? What man can judge rightly as to the soul of a very beautiful woman, covered as she is with a sort of illusive magic? What woman will not be charmed with a handsome scamp if he sinks at her knee with the ribbon of a high order on his breast, and his name old in the peerage? But these are extreme cases, where some weakness may be allowed human nature; yet, in general, what do we truly look up to? Who is our god? What

commands our instinctive admiration? Is it any thing so low down as money, celebrity, success? Who are the men we adore? What do we wish for ourselves?—to be the favorites of fortune and darlings of the hour,—to be “distinguished,” as they say,—distinguished in an ignorant and foolish world? Or is it even any thing a little higher up,—such as the splendors of genius, writing, painting, building, discovering, ruling,—but with a selfish heart in its bosom after all? What is it, I ask? Be it what it may, if we look up to any thing in man or—yes, to any thing in God, but to character,—if we revere in man or worship in God any thing but the soul,—we are in our degree barbarians and idolaters.

But again; let me turn from the foolish worship we give to others to the foolish worship we give ourselves. Natural gifts in one’s self are, to be sure, worthy of a certain admiration. I must admire a beautiful tree or a swift horse. But, even when the gift is good, let me acknowledge with gratitude its origin—that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,”—let me use it as a steward. Ah! where the beautiful woman takes a sort of credit for her beauty, and makes it ugly by pride, by airs, by hateful temper, and does not make it truly beautiful by tinging it with the heavenly light of modesty, humility, and love,—where any glory I have is not consecrated by a higher glory, then I am but in the crude, half savage condition! Suppose St. Paul had felt that that accidental



rescue of his was owing to an inner divinity of his own, and had pompously taken on airs as if he were a god !

We make ourselves "authors of ourselves," worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, did many unspeakable things. He shook serpents off him, and in a very true sense triumphed over the satanic powers, led captivity captive ; and the whole world and he himself could justly have said, "It is a god," for he acted like one. But he made for himself a far higher title still. Having done all and been all, he yet said that he derived all. He said, just as a child, that "a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven"; and so he showed us that even the highest divineness consisted not in taking up even a godhead, but in laying it down,—that to lay down was far more magnificent than to assume,—that, being in the form of God, he did not grasp it, but emptied himself. When, therefore, we make gods of ourselves or of others because of the gifts which we did not create or of success which we did not command, the Lord tells us that divineness is not in such things, but in a very simple and purely internal thing,—this,—to be sons of God, as Christ was.

On this account, while the kindred of the high and low is so interesting, the distance and strangeness are melancholy. A day in God's sight is, to be sure, as a thousand years, and we may get gradually formed ; but how long ?—how long ? Taking our reckoning by the great day-

star Christ, we find our race has been drifted by mysterious currents far out of the way into strange seas. Eighteen hundred years have done something, I know, to bring us to our course; something real has been done, and the European man is more like Christ now than he was then. And much has been done lately in the vast provisions for the pleasure, refinement, intellect, and power of man. But let us not be dazzled by this cloud of purple and gold. The discerning eye sees under,—sees the blood of the wild Tartar under the skin of the Russian; or, to use plainer language, under the surface of our handsome and smooth age, a low and unformed heart is still visible. Measured on that long line which separates the barbarian from Christ, it seems we are still not far from the barbarian point of departure, quite near the starting-place. The fine voice of the age is the voice of Jacob; but the hairy hands are still the hands of Esau. It would be easy to show that even our ideal of virtue, not to speak of our practice, is semi-barbaric. We think we are at least Christians in our standards; but no, we are far from it. What we think high and low,—what our public opinion solemnly confirms,—yes, and what our churches consecrate,—this (and much more the current sense of the respectable and honorable) is often to a thoughtful eye a clear betrayal of the original savage,—gilded, but still he.

We talk much of culture, and dispute much about civilization,—what it is,—and we all assume that we have

it; but Christ is civilization, and it is nowhere else. Christ is the goal to which the better soul of the human race is blindly reaching forth,—he is the “unconscious desire” of humanity; and you must measure all barbarism or civilization by its distance from him or its nearness to him.

So far, then, we have now gone in this narrative. We have seen the barbarians' hospitality and compared it with the kindness of Christ; we have seen the barbarian and the Hebrew sense of justice forcing down the facts of nature and science, and we have compared that with the larger and purer justice of Christ, which accommodates itself to all facts; and we have seen the barbarian sense of superiority in man, and have compared it with the true standard. Now as to all these points. Civilized men, ourselves, have ascended much, but are still low. Society and our own hearts have yet a long way to go. If we have made great advances in any thing it is in the kind, the humane. If we have left any thing behind, it is the cruel. We are gentle in our punishments, tender to distress, even in the animals; and, whatever comes of it, we will free the slave, for the idea of freedom has grown powerful with the race. The “good-will to men” began at the birth of Christ, and has moved on with his Church ever since. Early in the Christian ages it went into the Flavian amphitheatre, in the shape of the monk Telemachus it rushed into the arena, and mercy so offering itself prevailed and closed that amphitheatre and

at last all the amphitheatres. The same temper in a thousand ways has been in the heart of Christianity all through. She weeps with them that weep. She has been ignorant and bitter and murderous, because bigoted ; but, bigotry aside, she has never seen sorrow without a tear. She sees Christ himself in every sufferer, and so has "received with no little kindness" the whole world.

Read the singular history of charity in the early ages of Christianity, ages of horror. Through a world half starved a spirit entered, and asylums for lepers, hospitals, refuges for strangers, arose. The first hospital was founded by Fabiola at Rome in the fourth century. It sprang from the heart of a woman. And this Spirit of the Lord is still among us, and we hope in us. May that spirit live and grow in us,—may it widen out, from a mere barbarian hospitality to the outcast, to all the needs and wants of man,—to a universal reception and hospitality—that is, may we be Christians, alive unto God and alive unto man.

THE END.





















